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Methuen & Co., Ltd. 36 Essex Street, London, W.C.

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MY HUSBAND AND I

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

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MY HUSBAND AND I

I

WE were in mourning for my mother, who had died early in the autumn, and Macha, Sonia, and I had passed the entire winter in the country. Macha had been an old friend of my mother, and was my governess, whom I had known and loved as long as I could remember. Sonia was my younger sister.

The winter had been sad and dreary at Pokrovski, our old country house. It was cold, and the wind swept the snow in thick drifts as high as the window ledges ; the window panes remained frosted for days together, and we seldom walked or drove out. Visitors came but rarely, and the few who did come brought neither mirth nor amusement with them. They had mournful faces, and spoke with bated breath, as if they feared to awaken a sleeper ; they never smiled, but sighed and wept when they saw little Sonia and me in our black dresses. It was as if the Angel of Death was ever hovering in the air—as if the atmosphere was ever oppressed with his dread presence. My mother's room was kept shut, but I never passed the closed door without feeling an invisible something drawing me towards the cold and silent chamber.

I had passed my seventeenth birthday, and it had been my mother's intention to go to St. Petersburg that winter, so that I might be formally introduced into society. My mother's loss had been a great grief to me, but I must confess that in the midst of my sorrow for her, I also felt a painful shrinking from the thought of spending another winter in the death-like solitude of the country.

After a time the mingled emotions of loneliness, grief, and lassitude attained to such a degree that I scarcely ever left my room, never opened the piano, or took a book in my hand. When Macha urged me to occupy myself with this thing or that, my answer was always the same: 'I cannot; I have no heart for it,' while a voice within me whispered: 'Why try to make anything of myself since the best days of my life are slipping away so drearily?' To this depressing query I had but one reply—tears.

I heard them say I was much altered and was growing thinner, but I cared nothing for that. Why should I trouble myself on that account, since it seemed that I was doomed to spend the remainder of my life in this cheerless solitude—a thought which took from me all strength of will, and almost the desire to escape.

Towards the end of the winter Macha began to be seriously concerned as to my condition, and resolved to remove me from Pokrovski as soon as possible. But money was necessary for the accomplishment of such a purpose, and we did not as yet know how much would be left us, after the settlement of my mother's estate. So we waited, day after day, for a visit from my guardian, who was to inform us of the condition of affairs.

Finally, in March, he came. 'Thank God,' said Macha one day, as I glided like a shadow, from one corner to another, listless and unconcerned. 'Thank God, Sergei Mikhaïlovitch has come. He has sent word that he will be here to dinner. Pray arouse yourself, my little Katia,' she added imploringly. 'What will he think of you; he used to be so fond of you both.'

Sergei Mikhaïlovitch was one of our neighbours, and an old friend of my dead father, although much the younger of the two. Apart from the fact that his arrival might completely change our mode of life, I had loved and reverenced him since my babyhood, and Macha wished me to exert myself, because she knew it would cause me more pain to appear before

him in an unfavourable light than before any other of our acquaintances.

Not only because I, as well as every one else in the house, from Macha and Sonia, his god-daughter, down to the youngest stable boy, loved him, but also because of a remark my mother once made in my hearing, to the effect that she should be glad if I secured such a man as Sergei Mikhaïlovitch for my husband.

At the time it appeared to me a very absurd idea, My ideal was very different; he was young, tall. slender, pale, and melancholy; Sergei Mikhaïlovitch, on the contrary, was no longer young, and he was stout, strong, and always merry.

Yet, in spite of this difference, my mother's words kept constantly recurring to my memory, and six years before, when I was only eleven, and when Sergei Mikhaïlovitch had still said 'Thou' to me, and called me a spring violet, I had occasionally asked myself with inward trepidation: 'What shall I do if he wishes to marry me?'

Shortly before dinner, for which Macha had prepared a cream and some spinach, Sergei Mikhaïlovitch arrived. I saw him through the window as he drew near the house in a small sledge, and I hastened into the drawing-room, intending to act as though I did not expect to see him; however, no sooner did I hear the sound of his footsteps in the hall, and his loud, cheery voice replying to Macha's softer one bidding him welcome, than I forgot my resolution and ran to join them.

He was holding Macha's hand, talking rapidly and laughing gaily; but, as soon as he caught sight of me, he became silent and stood quite still, not offering me a word or sign of greeting. For my part, I was very uncomfortable, and felt myself blushing.

'Can it be possible! Yes, it is you; but how changed,' he said at last, drawing me towards him with both hands in his simple, hearty fashion. 'How you have grown! Our little violet has become transformed into a full-blown rose.'

He then clasped my hand so firmly as to almost give me pain. I expected him to kiss my hand, and had leaned [1] towards him ; but he only gazed steadily at me with his bright, kind eyes.

I had not seen him for six years, and found him also greatly changed. He was older, browner, and wore a heavy beard, which was not becoming ; however, he had the same simple, frank manner, and the same true, honest eyes, and pleasant, almost childlike, smile.

Five minutes later, we had forgotten that he was a guest, and looked upon him as one of the family, as the servants also did, showing their delight at seeing him by their eager attention to his wants.

He was not like our other neighbours, who thought it their duty to sigh and groan as long as they were with us. Quite the contrary ; he was talkative and merry, not alluding in the remotest degree to my mother, so that I thought such indifference astonishing and, in so intimate a friend, almost unpardonable. Later on I knew it to be, not indifference, but thoughtfulness.

After dinner, Macha had tea served in the little parlour, which my mother had generally used for that purpose. Sonia and I sat near her, and old Grigoriy brought Sergei Mikhaïlovitch one of my father's pipes. As in other days, he commenced to smoke while walking up and down the room.

' How many melancholy changes have taken place here—when I think of it,' he said, pausing suddenly in his promenade.

' Yes, yes,' replied Macha, covering up the samovar, and looking at Sonia and me as if half disposed to cry.

' Do you recollect your father ? ' asked Sergei Mikhaïlovitch, turning to me.

' Very faintly,' I answered.

' What a blessing it would be if he were with you now,' he said slowly and thoughtfully. ' I loved your

[1] It is customary in Russia for the gentleman to kiss the lady's hand, and she returns the salutation by kissing the gentleman's forehead.—*Trans.*

father dearly,' he added softly, a dreamy expression coming into his eyes.

'The dear God called him from us,' said Macha, throwing her napkin over the tea-caddy, while the tears dropped slowly into her lap.

'Yes, sad changes have occurred,' repeated Sergei Mikhaïlovitch, turning away; 'Sonia, come and show me your toys,' he added abruptly, going out into the large hall. With eyes full of tears I looked after him.

'We have one true friend,' said Macha.

'Yes, indeed,' I cried, my heart feeling unusually warm and comforted by the sympathy of this good man. The sounds of Sonia's laughter and his jests reached us from the hall. I sent him a cup of tea, and presently we heard him open the piano and strike the keys with Sonia's tiny fingers.

'Katia Alexandrowna,' he called; 'come here, pray, and give me some music.'

It pleased me to hear him use this simple yet authoritative tone, so I arose and went to him immediately.

'Play this,' he said, placing a copy of the Adagio of Beethoven's sonata, *Quasi una Fantasia*, on the rack. 'Let me hear how you can play,' he added, and taking up his cup of tea he went to the other end of the room.

I felt, though why I am sure I cannot tell, that it would be impossible to do otherwise than as he bid, or indeed even to make any apologies for want of practice or bad playing. So I seated myself at the piano and began, though I greatly feared his criticism, for I knew that he not only loved music but understood it.

The Adagio expressed the very emotions awakened by the conversation at the tea table, and my rendering of it appeared to satisfy him. The Scherzo he would not allow me to play.

'No, that would not go well,' he said, coming towards me. 'The Adagio was not badly performed. You understand music, I find.'

This moderate praise was so delightful that I felt myself colouring. It was a new and agreeable sensation, that of having my father's old friend talk to me as an equal, instead of as a child.

When Macha went upstairs to put little Sonia to bed, he spoke to me of my father; how he had first made his acquaintance; how the bond which united them had grown stronger with each added year, until death came for my father, while I was still a child in the nursery, busy with my toys and kitten.

For the first time I felt as if I knew my father, a noble-hearted, amiable man, created to love and be loved. Afterwards Sergei Mikhaïlovitch questioned me regarding my studies and my favourite occupations. He was no longer the jovial, fun-loving playfellow that I remembered, but an earnest, serious man, showing me sympathy and esteem. It was pleasant, and yet I felt an occasional dread lest something I might say would induce him to think me unworthy of being my father's daughter.

On Macha's return to the drawing-room she complained to Sergei Mikhaïlovitch of my apathy and dulness, matters which I had carefully refrained from mentioning.

'So she failed to tell me the most important thing concerning herself?' he remarked, shaking his head at me, half jestingly, half reproachfully.

'What was there to tell?' I replied. 'It is tiresome to think of, and will pass away.' In truth, I not only felt as if my melancholy would vanish, but as if it had either already done so, or had never existed at all.

'It is unfortunate not to know how to endure solitude. Are you really a young lady?'

'Yes, I believe so,' I laughingly replied.

'No, you are not; or, at least, you are only a very naughty one, who is only happy as long as she is receiving homage, and relapses into weariness as soon as she is left to her own devices.'

'You must have a fine opinion of me,' I said, trying to hide my embarrassment.

'No, it cannot be; you are so like your father. There must be something in you.'

Then his kind eyes turned on me again, filling me with singular emotion. I noticed now for the first time that despite his seemingly gay face and eyes, apparently expressive of unclouded serenity, there was an undercurrent of thoughtfulness, mingled with a little sadness, in his expression.

'It isn't possible for you to feel dull,' he added; 'you have music which you understand, books, various studies—your whole life is now open before you, and you must work to prepare yourself for it, so that you may have nothing to regret hereafter. In another year or so it may be too late.'

He thus spoke to me as a father or an uncle might have done, and I realized that he made an effort to remain on the same level as myself. I felt a little bit offended that he should consider me so much beneath him, but on the other hand I was pleased that he thought fit to make this effort for my sake.

During the remainder of the evening he talked to Macha on business.

'And now, good-bye, my dear Katia,' he said, taking my hand.

'When shall we see you again?' inquired Macha.

'Not before the spring. I am now on my way to Donilouka (our second estate) to see how affairs are going there, and then I must start for Moscow, greatly against my inclinations. But in the summer you will see me frequently.'

'Why do you intend to be away so long?' I asked mournfully. I had expected to be able to see him daily, and was so disturbed by this blow to my hopes that my sadness instantly returned to me. This must have been visible on my face and in my voice, for Sergei Mikhaïlovitch remarked: 'If you keep yourself busy and occupied the winter will soon pass by.'

His tone and manner were cold and quiet. 'I will examine you in the spring,' he added, allowing my hand to fall and then turning away.

In the vestibule, where we accompanied him, he hastened to put on his fur coat, and avoided looking at me. 'I wonder why,' I thought. 'Can it be that he fancies I care for his attention? He is certainly a good man, very good, but that is all.'

That evening Macha and I were very wakeful, and we talked a long time, not of him, but of the coming summer, and of how and where we should spend the winter. An important question to our minds, but why? For my part it seemed evident and simple that life must consist in being happy, indeed I would not picture anything else but happiness in the future; it was as if our gloomy old residence at Pokrovski had been suddenly flooded with light and sunshine.

II

SPRING came at last! My melancholy had vanished, and in its place had come a whole train of dreamy, yet objectless, hopes and longings. My entire mode of life was changed. I busied myself with Sonia; I enjoyed my music as I had never enjoyed it before; I studied with fresh zest; I wandered along the green garden pathways, or sat under the spreading trees, dreaming and hoping and thinking of—God alone knows what!

Sometimes I would remain by my window the whole night long, especially if it were moonlight; or wrapped in a long cloak, I would slip out of the house very quietly, so that Macha might not hear me, and roam up and down the terrace, even occasionally going through the dew to the pond, and making the circuit of the garden in the soothing stillness of the night.

I find it difficult to recall many of the reveries in which I then indulged; and, when by chance I succeed in remembering some of them, I can scarcely realize that they were the products of my own brain:

they were so weird and so far removed from the realities of life.

Towards the end of May Sergei Mikhaïlovitch returned. He called upon us, quite unexpectedly, as we sat on the terrace, where Macha had ordered tea.

The garden was already quite green ; the nightingales had built their nests in the shrubbery close by, and they were celebrating the close of the bright, warm day with their sweetest songs. The bushy lilac trees were covered with fragrant white and tinted buds, just ready to burst into loveliness and perfume ; and the thick foliage of the birch walks was illuminated by the red light of the setting sun. The terrace already lay in the cool shadows ; the night dew sprinkled the grass ; and, in the courtyard behind the garden, one could hear people moving about, and the flocks bleating on their arrival from the fields.

Silly Nikon drove before the terrace with his water-casks, and the cool stream flowing from the watering-pots described dark circles on the freshly dug earth around the dahlia plants. On the round table before us the brightly polished samovar shone and steamed, whilst cream, pancakes, and tarts lay invitingly on the white damask cloth.

Macha moved the cups about with her plump white hands in true housewifely fashion, whilst I, feeling very hungry after my bath, could not wait till tea was ready, but began eating some bread with fresh thick cream. I wore a linen blouse with open sleeves, and had a white kerchief tied over my damp hair.

Macha was the first to observe our friend's arrival. 'Ah, Sergei Mikhaïlovitch,' she said, 'how glad I am ! We were but just now speaking of you.'

I jumped up and tried to escape, but he caught me as I reached the hall door.

'You are surely not going to stand on ceremony in the country ?' he laughingly asked, looking quizzically at my head-dress. 'You do not object to wearing it before Grigoriy, and why should you before me ?'

I thought to myself that Sergei Mikhaïlovitch and old Grigoriy were two very different persons, though I kept the thought to myself. Besides, Sergei looked at me in a manner which disturbed me.

'I will be back in one moment,' I replied, breaking away from him.

'But what objection have you to your toilette? I find it very picturesque.'

'How oddly he looked at me,' I thought, as I dressed myself. 'Thank God, he is back again. Now we shall begin to live.'

One hasty glance in the mirror, and then I ran downstairs, and not caring to conceal my haste I reached the terrace quite out of breath.

Sergei Mikhaïlovitch sat by the table discussing business affairs with Macha. He smiled when his eyes met mine, but did not interrupt his conversation. He reported that he had found our property in excellent order, and said that we need not remain in Pokrovski longer than the following autumn, when we might go either to St. Petersburg for Sonia's education, or to Switzerland or Italy for our amusement.

'I wish you could go with us,' sighed Macha; 'I am afraid that if we went alone we should lose ourselves, as the babes did in the wood.'

'How gladly would I travel over half the world with you,' he answered, half in jest and half in earnest.

'Very well, then,' I said, 'let us make a tour around the globe.'

'And what would become of my mother and my business? But tell me now of all you have been doing since I left you.'

Then I told him of my occupations and amusements, adding that I had not felt the slightest shadow of loneliness. He praised and caressed me, just as if I had been a child and he my natural protector. So it seemed quite right to tell him, not only of all the praiseworthy things I had done, but of others also which I knew would not please him, as if I had been in the confessional and he the confessor.

The evening was so lovely that we lingered on the terrace after the removal of the tea things, and the conversation interested me so much that I did not notice how by degrees the busy hum of life and labour ceased.

The whole air was full of the odour of flowers; the dew bathed the grass; the nightingales sang in the lilac bushes near at hand, and the blue, starry sky bent close above us.

I first observed that night had crept upon us when a bat flew suddenly under the sailcloth covering of the terrace, and brushed against my white dress with his whirring wings. I shrank into a corner, and was on the point of uttering a shriek when he vanished into the darkness of the garden from whence he had come.

'How I love your Pokrovski!' said Sergei Mikhaïlovitch, changing the conversation. 'I should like to spend the rest of my life sitting thus.'

'Do it, then,' said Macha.

'Yes, do it indeed,' he repeated. 'Life will not allow it.'

'Why do you not marry?' asked Macha. 'You would make a good husband.'

'Because I am fond of sitting still?' he laughingly inquired. 'No, Macha, for you and for me it is too late to think of marriage. All my acquaintances have long since ceased to think of me as a marriageable man, and I myself agree with them—truly!'

These final words had, it seemed to me, been uttered with forced vivacity.

'What nonsense!' said Macha. 'Thirty-six years old, and the book of life already closed!'

'Yes, to be allowed to sit still is now my dearest wish; and certainly some very different ambition would be required if I dreamed of marriage. Ask Katia,' he added, indicating me by a nod of the head. 'Between us, you and I, we must marry her to some good man, and then we can be happy in seeing her happiness.'

There was an undercurrent of bitterness in his

voice and words which did not escape me. For a time he kept quite silent, and neither Macha nor I broke the stillness.

'Imagine if you can,' he began again, moving uneasily on his seat, 'what would be the situation if I, through some unhappy accident, had married a seventeen-year-old maiden, like Katia Alexandrowna, for instance—I fancy I have found an admirable illustration, the best possible.' He here laughed, and so did I, though I could not tell why.

'Now tell me truly and honestly,' he continued, looking at me steadily, 'would you not think it a great misfortune to find your life, still young and fresh, bound to that of an old, worn-out man, whose chief idea of happiness is rest and quiet, while in your heart and mind God alone knows what longings and aspirations are fermenting?'

The question made me very uncomfortable and I remained silent, for I really was at a loss for an answer.

'I am not making you a proposal,' he laughingly resumed. 'But tell us frankly if it is of such a husband as I have described that you dream when you wander alone in the twilight through the garden paths. Such a husband would be a serious encumbrance and source of unhappiness, would he not?'

'Not unhappiness, but——' I commenced to say.

'But assuredly not happiness,' he retorted quickly.

'No, and yet possibly I may deceive myself.'

'Say no more; you are right, and I am obliged to you for your frankness. I am glad we have had this conversation, for although the unhappiness of such a marriage might be very great on the side of the young girl, yet on mine the misery would be much greater.'

'What an odd fellow you are!' remarked Macha, as she went in to order supper. 'Years do not seem to have changed you in the least.'

After Macha left us all was still as nature about us. There was no sound save the nightingale's song, and this did not sound in snatches as it had done earlier

in the evening, but in subdued, long-drawn trills which flooded the whole garden with delicious melody. For the first time that season a second nightingale replied from a distant thicket, and for a moment the first singer was silent, and then both voices united and floated in quiet harmony over the world of night.

The gardener went by to his bed in the tool house ; two shrill whistles were heard from the high road, and then all became silent again. The evening breeze began to stir the foliage, the awning above us rocked gently to and fro, and with the gusts fresh perfume came floating over the terrace.

The silence became painful to me after the conversation just recorded, but I did not know how to break it.

'How beautiful is life!' he said at last. I breathed deeply.

'What is the matter?' he asked.

'Yes, life is beautiful,' I repeated, and we again fell into profound silence. My discomfort increased, for I feared that I had offended him by acknowledging that I thought him old, and I longed to make an apology, or offer an explanation, but I did not know how.

'Good night!' he finally said, rising suddenly. 'My mother expects me home to supper. I have scarcely spoken to her to-day.'

'But I wanted to play you a new sonata!'

'Another time,' he answered coldly. 'Adieu!'

I was now quite convinced that I had hurt his feelings, and it grieved me sorely, though I knew not how to make amends.

Macha and I went with him to the steps of the outer court, where we stood watching him until he was out of sight, and the sound of his horse's hoofs had died away in the distance. Then I returned to the terrace and began walking up and down, gazing at the garden ; and amid the damp haziness and the sounds of the night I lingered, watching and listening to whatever my fancy made visible or audible.

After two or three more visits from Sergei Mikhaïlovitch, the odd, uncomfortable feeling with which this strange conversation had inspired me died away. He came two or three times a week usually, and I soon became so accustomed to these visits, that I not only felt disappointed if he failed to come, but it almost seemed as if life could not be endured without them.

He treated me now as a dear friend, gave me advice and sympathy, scolded me occasionally, laughed at me not a little, but despite his cordiality and simple kindliness I always felt that there was a whole world of thought and feeling buried under the surface of his nature, in which I was allowed no share.

From Macha I heard that besides the care of his mother, who lived with him, the management of his own estate and our guardianship, he had other business affairs which were just then causing him a deal of trouble and annoyance.

But never a word could I inveigle him into saying about his own concerns, his plans and hopes. He always wrinkled his forehead in a curious fashion, as if to say—'Pray let those matters alone. They cannot concern you!' and then he turned the conversation into a totally different channel.

This vexed me at first, but after a while I grew accustomed to hear him speak only of what related to us, and found it natural and agreeable.

Another thing which tried me at first was his marked indifference to my personal appearance. Never did he intimate by word or glance that he thought me pretty; on the contrary, if any one complimented me in his presence, he wrinkled his brows and laughed mockingly. The fashionable dresses and head-gear with which Macha loved to adorn me on special occasions, called forth only sneers and ridicule from him, which vexed Macha and puzzled me.

Poor Macha, who had decided in her own mind that he liked me, could not understand why he would never look at me when I was most becomingly and tastefully arrayed, but I soon comprehended his

reasons. He wished me to be quite free from vanity, and as soon as I made this discovery I put aside every vestige of coquetry in dress and deportment, though after a time I began to coquet with simplicity itself.

I felt sure that Sergei Mikhaïlovitch liked me, though whether as a woman or child I did not stop to ask; and as I did not wish him to surmise that I was not all he would have me to be, I commenced to deceive him, involuntarily, though I think that in the effort to seem better than I was I really did grow better.

I knew that my personal appearance was so familiar to him that no deception would be possible there; but he did not know my mind fully, and in this respect I might cheat him. How happy I was whenever he said to me, with feelings which he strove to hide under a jesting tone: 'Yes, I believe there really is something in you.'

And on what occasions did he make these remarks, which made my heart dance for joy, and filled me with pride and satisfaction?

Only when I said either that I could understand old Grigoriy's love for his little grandchild, or when some story or poem had moved me to tears, or when I declared that I preferred Mozart to Schulhoff. It seems strange now, in looking back, to see with what unerring instinct I chose the good and true, although I could have given no reason for doing so.

Sergei Mikhaïlovitch never interfered with my amusements or occupations, yet it only required a certain peculiar movement of the eyebrows on his part to make what I had once loved utterly distasteful to me. If it occurred to him to give me some advice on any matter, I guessed in advance what he was about to say. If he questioned me with a glance, this glance at once drew from me the thought he was anxious to know. Indeed, it happened that my thoughts and opinions at that period of my life were scarcely so much my own as his, lent to me to brighten and illumine my otherwise dull existence.

Unconsciously I saw every one with changed

vision—Macha, Sonia, the servants—even my own avocations appeared in a new light. Reading, which had formerly been only a means of killing time, and of making me forget my loneliness, now became my chief delight, because we read together books which he selected. Teaching Sonia had once been a heavy task for me, but under his supervision her progress became my highest pride.

I had once regarded learning a piece of music perfectly as an impossibility, but now I knew *he* would hear it, and perhaps praise me for it; and I could repeat the same strain fifty times without fatigue, until poor Macha in despair put cotton in her ears to shut out the sounds.

Macha, too, whom I loved as a part of myself, became a new creature in my eyes. Then it was I first realized that it had not been her bounden duty to act as mother, friend, and slave for Sonia and me; then, for the first time I understood the self-denial and devotion of her loving nature, the amount of my indebtedness to her, and the utter impossibility of my ever being able to make any adequate return.

I learned, too, to think very differently of the servants and labourers on the estate. I had lived in their midst for seventeen years, yet the idea that they could love, and hope, and suffer as I could had never crossed my mind. Moreover, our garden, our woods, our fields which I had known ever since my birth, suddenly became new things to me, and I began to admire their beauty.

One day Sergei Mikhaïlovitch remarked that the only real happiness in life was to be found in living for others. I was greatly puzzled at first, but by and by his meaning became clear to me, and a whole world of new interests and pleasures opened up before me, without conflicting at all with my own especial joys. Everything since my infancy had remained shrouded in gloom and silence, as it were, and had awaited Sergei Mikhaïlovitch's coming to become apparent and appeal to my heart, filling it with felicity.

It frequently happened that summer that I was unable to sleep after I went to bed. Sometimes I would get up and sit by Macha, telling her over and over again how happy I was, which was quite unnecessary, seeing that it must have been plainly visible to the most superficial observer. Generally she would say that she too was happy and quite content with life as she found it, but, occasionally, she would be sleepy, and then she would scold me and order me to bed, where I would lie awake for hours, perhaps, thrilled through with a foreboding of coming happiness.

Sometimes my heart would be so full that I would arise and kneel down for the second time to give thanks to God for the blessings with which my life was crowned. How still it was at such times! Only the regular breathing of the sleeping Macha, the monotonous ticking of my watch, or the buzzing of an imprisoned fly could be heard. The doors and shutters were closed, and I should have been glad never to have left the room, never to have seen the dawn dispel the sensations I experienced.

My dreams, my longings, and my prayers peopled the darkness for me, sat by my bed, hovered over my pillow; and every thought was of *him*! every emotion for *him*! Yet how little did I then know that it was love!

III

ONE afternoon, at the close of the harvest, Sonia, Macha, and I went out, after dinner, into the garden to our favourite seat under an old linden tree. It was near the high road, across which we could see the fields with the thick woods beyond.

Sergei Mikhaïlovitch had not been to Pokrovski for three days, but we were certain of his coming that afternoon, for he had promised the overseer to visit the harvest field.

About two o'clock I saw him riding here and there

among the busy throng of reapers. Macha sent for some peaches and cherries, of which he was very fond, and then she leaned back, put her handkerchief over her face and went to sleep. I broke off a branch of the linden to fan her with, while watching the path through the fields by which I expected him to come.

Sonia sat on the stump of a tree, building a bower for her doll. The day was hot, the air motionless. Now and again I could hear a faint roll of thunder and see a zigzag flash of lightning come from a bank of dark clouds edging the horizon.

On the road close by large wagons heaped with grain went creaking past, and, after depositing their burdens, came rattling back, the peasants standing up in them, with cracking whips and fluttering kaftans. From the dusty fields came the sound of many voices, and I could see the women binding the yellow sheaves, in clear relief against the sombre green of the woods beyond. It was summer changing into autumn before my very eyes.

But while so many were labouring wearily in the dust and heat, Macha slept on under her soft cambric covering; a dish of black juicy cherries stood temptingly on the garden table; the ice water in the antique glass jug shone in rainbow tints in the sunshine, and I was so happy!

'What have I done to deserve so much?' I thought. 'What can I do to share my happiness with others?'

The sun was sinking behind the linden grove; the dust in the field was laid; the distant hills grew purple in the gathering twilight. Beyond the trees and near the barn I could see the points of three new stacks rise up; the last wagon-load of grain drove by, and then, with pitchforks on their shoulders and ears of wheat in their hats, the labourers went singing home. But still Sergei Mikhaïlovitch did not come!

Suddenly his tall form appeared in an entirely different direction from the one in which I had been expecting him. With bright face and raised hat he

came towards me. When he saw that Macha was asleep, he pressed his lips close together, nodded to me and walked on tiptoe. I perceived instantly that he was in one of his merriest moods—moods we used to designate as his ' mad joy.'

' Good day, little violet ! how are you ? Well ? ' he inquired, pressing my hand.

' I am particularly well,' he replied in answer to a corresponding inquiry from me ; ' I am but thirteen years old to-day, and am ready to play at horses or to climb trees. But what has poor Macha Karlowna done that you should be thus punishing her nose ? '

I then discovered that I had displaced her handkerchief and that my linden branch was tapping her innocent face. I laughed.

' No matter, when she wakes she will be sure to declare she has not been asleep at all,' I whispered, more for the pleasure of using a confidential tone than from fear of waking Macha.

He seized the plate of cherries as if it had been forbidden fruit and went to Sonia's play-house, taking a seat in her doll's place. Sonia was indignant, but he only laughed and teased her, declaring that she was out of temper because he would not give her all the cherries. However, they soon made peace and began eating them together.

' Shall I send for some more, or shall we go for them ? ' I asked.

By way of reply he took the plate, put Sonia's doll on it, and thus we went to the hot-house,[1] Sonia running behind and pulling the skirt of his coat until he gave her back her doll.

' You must be a violet,' he said, ' for when I came in your neighbourhood to-day something like the odour of violets seemed to envelop me ; not the strong perfume of hot-house violets, but the faint, delicious breath of the first dark blossoms which peep out from the melting snow in the early spring.'

' How have things gone in the fields to-day ? ' I

[1] In Russia, fruit trees are reared in houses, whose roofs are replaced by nets in warm weather.—*Trans.*

asked, to hide the secret emotion his words awakened in my heart.

'Exceedingly well; these people are so trusty; the better one knows them the more cordially one esteems them.'

'Yes,' I rejoined, 'before you came to-day I watched them at their work, and felt ashamed of my easy, useless life, contrasted with theirs, so full of hardship and toil.'

'Do not coquet with such feelings as these, Katia,' he said seriously. 'God forbid that you should ever know by experience the life these people lead. But where are the cherries?'

The hot-house was locked, and none of the gardeners were to be seen. Sonia ran to get the key, but Sergei Mikhaïlovitch would not wait. Climbing on to the wall, he lifted the net, and sprang under it.

'If you want some cherries, hand me the plate,' he said.

'No; I wish to pick them myself. I will go for the key; Sonia will never find it,' I answered.

But at that moment an indescribable longing to see him, when he fancied himself unobserved, came over me. I crept upon tiptoe to the other side of the hot-house, climbed upon an empty barrel which stood there, and, leaning over the wall, peered into the house with its old, knotted trees laden with black, luscious fruit. After a moment I saw Sergei Mikhaïlovitch leaning against an old tree, his eyes closed and his hat off. He evidently thought that I had gone off, and that no one could see him. Seating himself upon a stump, he rolled a bit of gum between his fingers. Then suddenly he shrugged his shoulders, opened his eyes, and uttered a word with a smile. This word surprised me so much that I felt ashamed of my spying action; I fancied that he had said 'Katia!'

'It cannot be,' I thought to myself; but just then he repeated, still more tenderly, 'Dear Katia!'

I heard these words distinctly. My heart beat so violently with a rush of joyous feeling that I

was forced to grasp the wall to keep myself from falling.

But my involuntary movement was heard. He looked up, blushing deeply; our eyes met, and I laughed, whereupon his face brightened with pleasure. It seemed to be all aglow with happiness; and he was no longer the old, affectionate uncle, to be obeyed and revered, but a man like other men, loving me and fearing me, and whom I also feared and loved.

For a minute or two not a word was uttered, and then he became grave. The smile on his lips and the light in his eyes died away. It was as if we had been doing something wrong; as if he had realized it, and having made an effort to master himself, wished me to act in the same way. He turned to me with brotherly coldness, and said: 'Get down; you might fall and hurt yourself. And smooth your hair. What a sight you are!'

My heart sank. 'Why should he dissemble and treat me thus?' I thought, and a great desire to try my power upon him took possession of me.

'No, I wish to pick some cherries,' I replied, taking hold of the nearest bough with both hands, and swinging myself over the wall and into the hot-house before he could say a word.

'What folly!' he exclaimed; and indeed, this act of mine, as soon as committed, had made me feel most uncomfortable.

'You might have hurt yourself,' he added. 'How will you get out again?'

He now seemed more disturbed than before; but his trouble no longer delighted me; on the contrary, it frightened me. I also felt disturbed. I blushed and drew aside, not knowing what to say; and I began to gather some fruit, not knowing where to put it. I reproached myself, I repented, I felt frightened, and it seemed to me that I had lowered myself in his eyes by my inconsiderate conduct. In our embarrassing situation we both remained silent until Sonia returned with the key and released

us. We then still avoided speaking to one another, and in preference we addressed ourselves to the child.

When we got back to Macha, who declared, as I had predicted, that she had not been asleep at all, I felt more at ease. Sergei Mikhaïlovitch now resumed his old fatherly tone and manner. But this did not deceive me, for I recalled a conversation which had taken place a short time previously. Macha had remarked that, while it was perfectly proper for a man to declare his love, all the world would scorn a woman who should do so unasked.

'Not so,' replied Sergei Mikhaïlovitch. 'It often happens that a man neither can nor dare say that he loves.'

'Why not?' I asked.

'Oh! because people seem to expect some marvellous phenomenon as the outcome of a declaration. I think that the men who say "I love you" so solemnly often deceive themselves, or what is worse, deceive others.'

'But how is a woman to know she is loved, if the man says nothing?' persisted Macha.

'That I know not. If the feeling is there, it will not fail to show itself. When I read a novel I cannot help fancying what a foolish face Lieutenant Stretski or Sir Alfred Vere de Vere must wear, when they say "I love you, Elenora!" They think that something extraordinary will then take place, whereas nothing at all happens, neither in them nor in the lady: faces, looks, and all the rest remain quite the same.'

I knew at the time that this jesting was a cover for some hidden emotion, but Macha was extremely annoyed at hearing her heroes of romance so disrespectfully handled. 'Eternal paradoxes!' she impatiently complained. 'Tell me truly, Sergei Mikhaïlovitch, have you never told a woman you loved her?'

'No; never have I fallen on my knees before any woman, neither do I ever mean to do so,' he answered gaily.

'He need not say he loves me,' I thought, recalling the scene in the hot-house. 'He loves me, I know, and all his artifices will not change my opinion.'

During the evening he scarcely spoke to me, but I detected his love in each of his words, in each of his gestures and his glances. The only thing that moved me was that he still thought it necessary to hide his love and feign indifference, when everything was already so clear, when we might so easily have been happy beyond expression. However, on the other hand, I felt guilty in having jumped into the hot-house to join him, and it still seemed to me that he could no longer esteem me, and must feel incensed with me.

After tea I went to the piano, and he followed me there.

'Play something, Katia. It is a long while since I heard you,' said he.

'I wanted, Sergei Mikhaïlovitch——' I began, and suddenly I looked him straight in the eyes. 'I want to know whether you are angry with me?'

'Why, pray?'

'Because I didn't obey you this afternoon,' I answered, blushing.

He understood me; shook his head, and began to smile. And his smile told me that he had indeed been inclined to scold me, but that he no longer felt the necessary strength to do so.

'It's over, isn't it? And we are good friends again?' said I, as I sat down at the piano.

'I should think so, indeed,' he answered.

The only light in the long, lofty room was that given by the wax candles on the piano. The remainder of the apartment was in darkness. Through the open windows the soft air of the summer night stole in; all sounds were hushed, except Macha's regular footfall as she paced up and down, and the impatient pawing of Sergei Mikhaïlovitch's horse, waiting for his master.

He sat down behind me so that I could not see him; but amid the gloom, amid the harmony that filled

the room, I felt that he was present. Each of his looks and movements, though I could not behold them, penetrated into my heart. I played Mozart's Fantasia Sonata, and though I was thinking of Sergei Mikhaïlovitch and not of the music, I felt that I played well and pleased him. I partook of the enjoyment he experienced, and realized that his eyes were fixed upon me. By an involuntary movement, while my fingers still touched the keys, unconscious of what they were doing, I looked round and saw his head standing out against the luminous sky. He was sitting with his forehead resting on his hand, and gazing at me attentively with his sparkling eyes. I smiled, as I noticed his glance, and stopped playing. He also smiled and nodded towards the piano with a reproachful air, as if asking me to continue. While I had been playing, the moon had risen, and shining through the open windows, it now flooded the room with its silvery light. Macha paused in her promenade, to say it was against conscience I should break off in the finest part of the composition; besides which, I had played very carelessly.

Sergei Mikhaïlovitch responded, however, that I had never played so well, and then he began to walk out and in from the moonlit room to the dark hall, ever and anon looking at me with a smile. I also smiled, and even without cause. I longed to laugh, so happy did I feel. . I threw my arms round Macha's neck, and kissed her on her round throat beneath her chin; then, as Sergei walked into the room again, I assumed a serious expression though I still longed to laugh. 'What is the matter with her to-day?' said Macha to him, with a puzzled look. He made no reply, but only glanced at me and smiled.

'What a night it is!' he said, stepping out into the garden. We followed, and indeed I think I have never seen such another night. The full moon hung in a cloudless sky over the house, and the shadows of the statues and the awning fell upon the paths and grass-plot in front of us. The glass dome of the

conservatory shone in the white light, while the broad garden alleys stretched out between the flower beds and became lost in the hazy distance. On our right hand, in the shadow of the house, all was black and mysterious, but the more vivid in contrast were the fantastic tips of the silver poplars, which seemed as if they were preparing with spread wings to fly off into the deep blue heavens. 'Shall we take a walk?' I asked.

Macha assented, but remarked that I must have some overshoes.

I replied coolly that it was not necessary, for Sergei Mikhaïlovitch would give me his arm, just as if that would protect my feet from the dewy ground. However, no one seemed to find anything out of the way in the remark. He had never given me his arm before, and now I took it, and he did not seem surprised by my doing so. We all three went out. All the little world around me, the heavens, the garden, the air I breathed, no longer seemed the same. When I looked before me down the path, it seemed to me as if one could not go further, as if the world ended there.

It seemed, too, as though every object had been petrified into motionless and changeless beauty. But by and by it became our own garden again, with its familiar flowers and trees, its mingled lights and shadows; it was indeed his slow and regular footsteps which kept pace with mine, and Macha's creaking shoes; with the lady moon looking on between the interlaced boughs of the linden grove. At one moment I looked at *him*. There were no trees at that point of the path, and his face appeared to me in the full moonlight. He looked so handsome and so happy.

'Ah! there 's a frog,' suddenly cried a voice near me.

'Who said that, and why?' I wondered, until I recollected that it was Macha's voice, and that she was afraid of frogs. I saw the tiny fellow hop away from my feet and sit motionless in front of us, so

that his small shadow was clearly reflected on the path.

'You are not afraid?' questioned Sergei Mikhaïlovitch. I glanced up at him. He had said, 'You are not afraid,' but the words I heard were, 'I love you, beloved! I love you!' and lights, shadows, sky, and land, all repeated again and again, 'I love you.'

We walked on until Macha said that it was time to go in. I had compassion on the poor soul, for why was she not young and happy and beloved like myself?

We returned to the house, but he did not leave us for a long while yet. Macha forgot to tell us that it was late, and we talked on about all sorts of things, indifferent matters, seated near one another and without in the least degree imagining that it was three o'clock in the morning. The cocks had crowed three times when he went away. He took leave in his usual fashion, without saying anything in particular. But I knew that he was now mine, and that I could not lose him. As I, myself, realized that I loved him I told everything to Macha. She was glad but could not sleep, and, for my own part, I remained for a long while yet upon the terrace and in the garden, trying to recall each word, each incident of the evening, again and again strolling along the paths down which we had passed together.

I did not go to bed all night, and for the first time in my life I saw the sun rise and learned what daybreak was. I never so enjoyed a night or morning. Only, I asked myself, why did he not simply tell me that he loved me? 'Why does he invent difficulties?' I thought; 'why does he call himself old, when everything might so easily be settled? Why lose precious time which will perhaps never return again? He must tell me that he loves me, he must take my hand in his, bow his head and say, "I love." When, with a flush, he lowers his eyes before me, then I will tell him everything. Or rather, I will tell him nothing, but I will press him in my arms and burst

into tears. But supposing I were mistaken? What if he did not love me?'

This thought suddenly passed through my mind. I felt afraid. Heaven alone knows how far my feelings might have led me. The recollection of his confession and mine in the hot-house, when I had jumped in to join him, already gave me a pang at the heart. Tears moistened my eyes, I began to pray, and a rather strange thought took possession of me, imparting calmness and reviving hope within me. I resolved to begin my devotions, and to select my birthday for my betrothal. How, and why? How could that be? I knew not; but from that very moment I thought it would happen thus. In the meantime, while I had been thinking in this fashion, it had become quite light, and indeed every one was getting up when I at last retired to my room.

IV

THE Fast of the Assumption had begun, and as my birthday occurred towards the close of that week, it was only natural for me to prepare for the reception of the Sacrament.

Sergei Mikhaïlovitch did not come near us the whole of that week; but far from feeling hurt or annoyed by this negligence, I felt glad, merely hoping for his coming on my birthday. Every day that week I rose with the lark, and walked alone in the garden, seeking to recall my sins of omission and commission in days that were past, so that I might refrain from again falling into the same errors.

After an early breakfast the drozhky would drive up, Macha or one of the maids would get in with me, and we would then drive the three miles to the church. On arriving there, I invariably remembered that prayers were offered for 'all who entered in the fear of God,' and I took great care to ascend the two or three grass-grown steps with a reverential mind.

At that time of day there were usually only ten or twelve persons present, principally labourers or peasants. I returned their salutations with friendliness and humility, and always purchased from the sacristan (an old soldier) a lighted candle to place before the sacred pictures.

Through the chief portal of the Holy Place [1] I could see the altar cloth which my mother had embroidered, while over the holy screen were the two angels with star-studded robes, who had appeared so large to my childish eyes, and above them hovered the dove with the golden glory, a never-failing source of wonder and admiration to my infant mind.

Behind the railing of the choir stood the font in which I had been baptized. The old pope wore a stole made from my father's pall, and he read the service in the same monotonous voice which I heard him use when he had baptized Sonia and buried my father and mother. Then I heard the cracked voice of the chorister, also familiar, and that of an old woman whom I had seen at the church ever since I could remember; who was always there, leaning against the wall, pressing a handkerchief between her clasped hands, gazing with tear-dimmed eyes at one of the sacred pictures over the choir, and murmuring prayers with her toothless mouth. There was nothing new to me in all this; indeed, it was holy to me through old and tender associations, but in those days it seemed to have gained a new and strange significance.

I joined in the prayers with devotion, earnestly imploring God to enlighten me when I did not understand, and to forgive me when I erred through ignorance. When the prayers of penitence were read, I recalled my past life, and this past time of my innocent childhood seemed so black to me, in comparison with the present serenity of my soul, that in my fright I wept for myself. But, at the same time,

[1] In Russian churches the Holy Place, into which no woman must enter, is separated from the body of the church by a rood screen with three doors.—*Trans.*

I felt that I was forgiven, and that if I had had still a larger number of transgressions to reproach myself with, my repentance would have been all the more agreeable. When the pope said, 'The blessing of God be with you,' it was as if actual bodily comfort and security had been communicated to me, and my heart was flooded with light and warmth.

When the service was over, if the pope drew near to me and asked me if he ought not to go to our house to celebrate the vesper service, I thanked him with emotion for his offer, and told him that I would come to the church.

'You will really take that trouble?' he asked.

I did not know what to reply to that; I was afraid of sinning through pride.

When Macha was not with me, I always returned home on foot. It was a real pleasure to be able to step out into the wet, dirty road, as if I were gaining some spiritual good by the sacrifice of my personal comfort.

One evening I overheard our steward telling Macha that the peasant Simon had come that day begging for a few planks to enable him to make a coffin for his daughter, who had just died.

'Are they so poor as that?' I asked.

'So poor that they have no salt even for their bread,'[1] was the answer.

It was as though something sharp had pierced my heart, but at the same time I was pleased, as it were, that I had heard this. Telling Macha that I was going out for a walk, I ran upstairs, gathered together all the money I had (which was not much, it is true) and ran through the garden towards the village. I reached Simon's hut unobserved, placed the money on the window-sill and knocked. The creaking door was opened, and a voice asked, 'Who is there?' Then I shrank back like a criminal, and ran away home as quickly as I could, trembling with excitement.

On my return Macha asked me where I had been,

[1] A Russian expression signifying great misery.—*Trans.*

and what was the matter with me; but I did not even understand what she said, and I did not answer her. I shut myself up in my room and walked about, feeling incapable of doing anything, or even of thinking, unable, indeed, to realize the sensations I experienced. I pictured to myself the joy of Simon's family, the blessings they showered upon the person who had left them the money; and I now regretted that I had not given it to them in person. I asked myself what Sergei Mikhaïlovitch would have said had he known of the step I had taken, and I felt glad that he would never know of it. And, indeed, I felt so joyful, so pleased with myself and others, that even the idea of death seemed to me full of happiness. I smiled, I prayed, I wept, and suddenly I loved every one upon earth, including myself, with strange, unnatural fervour.

I passed a deal of time in reading the Gospels, and the more I read them the more simple and restful seemed the story of that God-like career, the more firm and stable our hope of a future life through Jesus. And when laying the book aside, I again thought of one's present existence, everything seemed to me clear and easy: it appeared impossible to act otherwise than rightly, or to avoid loving every one and being loved in return. I cannot tell how good and loving every one was to me at that time; even Sonia, whose lessons were always more or less of a trial to me, now took exceeding pains to be studious and obedient. Others behaved towards me as I endeavoured to behave towards them. In thinking over those to whom I might have given offence, in order that I might ask their forgiveness before receiving the Holy Sacrament, I remembered a lady in the neighbourhood, of whom I had once made fun in the presence of one of her friends, and who, feeling very much hurt, had never visited us since. I now wrote to her, acknowledging my fault, and begging her forgiveness. She returned a note, in which she accused herself and exonerated me. I wept for pleasure as I read the simple, kindly missive. Now

I began to understand why Sergei Mikhaïlovitch had said that true happiness was only to be found in living for others. I no longer dreamed of society, or travel, but of a quiet home life in the country, of self-abnegation, love and peace, and gratitude to kind and comforting Providence.

I partook of the Holy Sacrament on my birthday as I had intended to do, and I left the church in such a state of exaltation that I dreaded the return of my old life. We had scarcely alighted from the drozhky after the service before a well-known troïka thundered over the bridge, and I recognized Sergei Mikhaïlovitch. He at once congratulated me, and we entered the house together.

Never had I felt so unconstrained in his presence as on that morning. It was as if I moved in a world above him, of which he knew nothing. Perhaps he understood what was transpiring within me, for he treated me with especial gentleness, almost with deference. When I opened the piano, he closed and locked it, putting the key in his pocket, and saying: 'Do not play to-day; there is a harmony in your soul better than music.'

I felt grateful to him for saying this; but at the same time it rather annoyed me that he should so easily, so clearly understand what was going on in my mind—matters which I had been desirous of keeping secret from every one.

During dinner he announced that he had come, not only to congratulate me, but also to say good-bye, for he purposed starting for Moscow on the following morning.

He looked at Macha as he spoke, but I saw his eyes scan my face, as if he feared to read trouble there. However, I did not show myself either astonished or disturbed. I did not even ask him if his absence would be of long duration. I had expected that he would use this language; and I knew that he would not go away. How did I know it? I cannot now explain; but on that memorable day it seemed to me that I knew all that had happened and that would

happen. I was, so to say, in one of those happy dreams in which one has a luminous vision of the past and the future.

Sergei Mikhaïlovitch wished to leave soon after dinner, but Macha had lain down, and he was obliged to wait to say good-bye to her. As it was very warm in the drawing-room, we went out on to the terrace.

We had scarcely taken our seats before I began the conversation which was to decide the fate of my love. Where my quietness and self-possession came from, I do not know. It was as though another person were speaking with my voice.

Sergei Mikhaïlovitch sat opposite to me, leaning against the balustrade, and picking the leaves from a twig of lilac which he held in his hand. When I commenced to speak he let the branch fall, and leant his head on his hand, an attitude which quite as frequently indicates disturbance of spirit as repose of mind.

'Why are you going away?' I asked, looking him full in the face.

'I have some business to attend to,' he answered, lowering his eyes. I knew how hard it was for him to answer me with such a falsehood.

'Listen,' I said; 'you know how important a day this has been to me, and I won't hide from you how much I love you, or how greatly I need your presence. And now, again I ask you, *why* are you going? *I must know!*'

'It is not easy to tell you the truth,' he answered. 'I have thought a great deal about you and myself during this past week, and I have decided that I must go. *Why*, you can surmise, and if you care for me you will not press me further.' Then, after wiping his forehead with his hands, he covered his eyes and added: 'It is very hard for me—and you must understand why.'

My heart throbbed violently at these words.

'No, I do not understand you,' I answered. 'Speak out, in God's name. I am prepared to hear anything.'

He changed his position uneasily, and again picked up the twig of lilac.

'Well,' he said, after a pause, during which he had vainly struggled to regain his usual firmness of voice, 'it is almost impossible for me to explain my meaning, and yet I will try to do so.' As he said this he again covered his face as if suffering physical pain.

'Well?' I questioned.

'Well, fancy, if you can, an old man worn out, whom we will call A, and a bright young maiden whom we will call B. The latter is ignorant of both men and life. Peculiar family circumstances have thrown them together, and he loved her at first as a daughter, never thinking it possible to care for her in any other way.'

He paused, but I said nothing, and he presently resumed in a quicker, firmer tone, but without looking at me: 'By and by A forgot that B was so young, and that life was as yet only an amusement to her, and suddenly he awoke with a shock, to find that he loved her with his whole being. This discovery frightened him, his feelings weighed him down like remorse, and he resolved to go away before their old friendly intercourse had had time to change in character.'

So saying he again passed his hand before his eyes.

'But why was he afraid of loving her otherwise?' I asked, in my usual manner I thought, but there must have been some faint touch of raillery in my voice, for he replied in a depressed tone: 'You are young, I am not. Life to you is but play. To me it is real and serious. Do not trifle with me; it would not be right to do so, as you might one day discover. So A would have answered B,' he added. 'Now you know why I am going, so let us say no more about the matter, I implore you.'

'Yes, yes, we must talk about it,' I replied, tears choking my utterance. 'Tell me truly, did he love her or did he not?'

Sergei Mikhaïlovitch made no answer.

'If he did not love her, why did he amuse himself with her, as if she were a child?'

'A was wrong,' he answered, 'but he made an end of it, and they parted as friends.'

'That is dreadful! But was no other ending possible?' I persisted, drawing back the next moment, however, alarmed at my words.

'Yes,' replied Sergei Mikhaïlovitch, 'two endings were possible.' Then he took his hands from his eyes and gazed at me fixedly. 'Do not interrupt me again, and for God's sake understand me aright. A did indeed love B truly, and told her so, but she laughed and said it could only be a joke. Since then A has become mad; what was only jesting for her has been a life curse for him.'

I shuddered and made an attempt to speak, but he would not allow it.

'Wait,' he continued, in a trembling voice, 'some one said that she took pity on him, the poor child, who as yet knew nothing of life or man, and so imagined that pity was love. And she actually married him—and he, foolish fellow, fancied that life might bloom anew for him; but he realized only too soon that both he and she had been deceived. However, don't let us speak of it any longer,' he concluded, unable to say any more, and then he began to pace up and down with impatient steps.

'Don't let us speak of it any longer,' had been his final words, but I knew that he was waiting with feverish anxiety for what I should say. I tried to speak, but could not. I looked at him. His face was white, his lips quivering. I made a mighty effort and at last burst the bonds which seemed to enthral me. In a faint, scarcely audible voice, I said: 'And the third ending was, that he did not love her, but caused her sore grief, thinking he had a right to do so. And he went away, feeling proud of his conduct. Yes, the trifling has been on your side, not on mine, for I have loved you from the first—yes, I love you,' I repeated, and the words ended in a wild shriek which frightened me.

Sergei Mikhaïlovitch stood before me with blanched face, his lips trembled more and more, and two great tears rolled down his cheeks.

'It was wicked of you,' I cried, and I thought I should suffocate with my bitter, repressed tears. I attempted to go away, but he prevented me. His head sank on my knees, his lips pressed my trembling hands, while his hot tears rained upon them.

'My Lord, if I had only known!' he murmured.

'Why? Why?' I repeated mechanically, and my heart was full of that happiness which at times soon fades away, that happiness which, once gone, will never more return.

Five minutes later Sonia rushed upstairs to Macha, shouting so that the whole house could hear her, 'Our Katia is going to marry Sergei Mikhaïlovitch.'

V

THERE was no reason why we should postpone our marriage, although Macha greatly desired to go to Moscow to procure a trousseau for me, while Sergei Mikhaïlovitch's mother wished him to refurnish the old house and buy a new carriage. But we were both of the opinion that such details could be just as well attended to afterwards; so we were married two weeks after my birthday, very quietly, without guests, bridesmaids, or champagne, or any of the usual accessories of a wedding.

Sergei Mikhaïlovitch told me that his mother was greatly dissatisfied with a marriage destitute of any of the pomp and show usual on such occasions. She wanted some music and an avalanche of presents, and would have been glad if the house had been turned topsy-turvy, as on the occasion of her own wedding which had cost thirty thousand roubles. Making the best of the situation, however, she had explored all the chests in the store-room and had held a long discussion with Mariushka, her house-

keeper, as to certain carpets, curtains, and trays which she considered were indispensable to our happiness.

At home, Macha and my maid Kushminishna made the most of this opportunity for the display of their skill in housewifely arts. They were quite willing that we should spend our days in dreaming of love and our happy future, while they busied themselves with the details of my wardrobe, and debated the important question as to the proper width of the embroidery on my clothes, and the hemming of my new napkins and table-cloths.

Many were the mysterious communications which passed between Nikolski and Pokrovski, and although Sergei Mikhaïlovitch's mother and Macha Karlowna had always been the best of friends, still one could now perceive a certain degree of rivalry between them.

Tatiana Simonowna, with whom I now grew better acquainted, was a stern, strict housewife of the old school. Sergei reverenced her as his mother, and loved her with tenderness, regarding her as the best and wisest woman in the world. Tatiana Simonowna had always been friendly towards our family, and she was highly pleased with her son's alliance. Still, whenever we were together during this fortnight, she constantly endeavoured to impress upon me the fact that I was not nearly good enough for Sergei, an opinion in which I heartily concurred.

During the time which elapsed between our betrothal and our marriage we saw one another, Sergei and I, every day. He came to dinner and stayed till midnight; but although he often told me, and I knew he spoke the truth, that he could not live without me, he never spent a whole day in my company, but attended regularly to his business matters. Our intercourse remained much the same as formerly; we addressed each other as 'you,' not as 'thou'; he did not even kiss my hand, and he not only did not seek, but he avoided opportunities of finding himself alone with me, as if he had feared

giving way to the great and dangerous tenderness that possessed him.

During the whole of this fortnight the weather was very stormy, forcing us to keep indoors. Our favourite seat was between the piano and the window. The candlelight played on the dark window panes within, the rain-drops spattered against them without. The water, which we could hear pouring from the gutter on the roof, and the heavy fog which lay over the garden and terrace, made our corner warmer and cosier by contrast.

'Do you remember the story I once told you of A and B?' Sergei asked me on one of those stormy evenings when we sat together in our snug corner.

'How can I help recollecting that stupid story? What a fortunate thing it ended so well!'

'Yes, and how easily I might have lost my happiness by my own fault. You saved me. But I lied then, and have been ashamed of it ever since.'

'No matter, it is past now.'

'Ah! I was trying to preach reason to myself.'

'What for? One should never do so in such a case,' I retorted.

'I did it badly enough! And yet, when I came into the country, after all my mistakes and disillusions, I thought and said that love was over for me, and that it only remained for me to faithfully fulfil the duties of middle age. It was long before I suspected my feelings for you. I hoped, I feared, I knew not what to think. At length, however, one evening (do you remember it?) when we walked in the garden, I became alarmed. My good fortune seemed too great to be possible. I was to receive so much and give so little. You are still a bud, only beginning to bloom; you love for the first time, whereas——'

'Tell me,' I interrupted; but pausing again, afraid of the possible reply, I added: 'Never mind, it is nothing.'

'You wish to know if I have ever loved any one else?' he said, guessing my thoughts. 'No, I have

never loved nor been loved.' He hesitated, as if moved by some sorrowful memory. 'No,' he repeated. 'But, after all, what have I to give you? Love, it is true.'

'Is that so little?' I said, looking him in the eyes.

'Little for you, dear heart, though my happiness often prevents me sleeping; I think of what a charmed life we shall lead. I have lived a long while already, and yet it seems to me that I have only now found happiness. A pleasant, quiet life in our little nook, with the possibility of doing good to others; work, whence some advantage is always derived; then for recreation some books and music, nature, and a few intimate friends. All that means happiness, more happiness than I ever dreamed of. And above it all, such a wife as you will be, children perhaps; in one word, everything that a man can wish for in this world.'

'Yes,' said I.

'Yes, for me, for my youth has gone by; but not for you,' he answered. 'You might have preferred to seek for happiness elsewhere, and have found it elsewhere. It seems to you that what I have mentioned means happiness, simply because you love me.'

'No, I have never longed or cared for aught else than a quiet family life. You have just expressed my own thoughts.'

He smiled. 'So it seems to you, dearest,' he remarked. 'But it is little, very little for you. You have beauty and youth,' he added pensively.

I felt slightly irritated on finding that he would not believe me, and that he seemingly reproached me for my youth and good looks. 'Well, why do you love me, then?' I asked impatiently, 'for my youth or for myself?'

'I don't know, but I love you,' he answered, giving me a keen and fascinating glance.

I made no reply, but involuntarily looked him in the eyes. And suddenly something very strange happened to me. I ceased to behold the surroundings, even his face disappeared from before me, and

all that I felt conscious of was the fire of his eyes flashing into mine; and it seemed to me as if his eyes penetrated me, and then everything became confused; I no longer saw anything whatever, and was obliged to lower my eyelids to escape from the feeling of mingled fright and pleasure which his glance had imparted to me.

On the evening before our wedding day the skies cleared, and the first cold, bright autumnal weather followed upon the long rain which had begun during the last days of summer.

I went to bed that night happy in thoughts of what the morrow was to bring, and I awoke with the dawn. I went into the garden. The sun was just rising, shooting his pale rays through the half-stripped linden trees. The paths were covered with dead leaves, the dahlias hung black and limp on their stalks, and the white frost lay like a silver covering on the green sward and the iron rails of the verandah. There was not a cloud in the clear, cold sky.

'Is the day already here?' I thought. 'Can it be possible that to-morrow I shall no longer count this as home? Am I to live without Macha or Sonia after to-day? Shall I never again knock on the wall of Sonia's room for a morning greeting, and hear for answer her silvery laughter?'

I awaited Sergei's coming with impatience, for my heart was oppressed with strange emotion. He came early, and at about noon we went to church to hear memorial prayers for my father and mother.

'If they were only living,' my heart whispered, as we turned homewards, and I silently pressed the arm of the man who had been their dearest friend. My father's spirit had seemed near me, blessing my choice, when I bowed my face against the cold stones paving the church.

Memories and hopes, joy and pain, had produced a curious stir of feelings in my breast, with which the fresh air, the stillness, the bare fields, the cold, bright sunshine appeared to sympathize.

Suddenly Sergei Mikhaïlovitch turned his thought-

ful face towards me. 'Will he speak of what I am thinking about?' I thought; and then, without mentioning any name, he began to talk of my father, as if resuming an interrupted conversation. 'He said to me one day, jestingly, "I wish you would marry my little Katia."'

'How happy, then, he must be if he knows of it,' I replied, pressing closer to Sergei.

'You were a very tiny child then,' he continued, looking into my eyes. 'I often kissed those eyes then, because they were so like your father's, not thinking that I should ever love them so fondly for their own sake.'

We walked home slowly through the fields of stubble, along the unfrequented footpaths, no one near enough to hear our steps or voices. On our right, the greyish brown meadows stretched off to the distant woods; on our left, rows of winter corn drooped under the frost of the past night; long, transparent cobwebs floated through the clear atmosphere, flew into our faces and on to our hair; and as we talked, the sound of our voices rose above us in the motionless air, as if we were the only living creatures in the universe—as if we were quite alone under the blue vault in which the autumnal sun now shone so brightly.

When we reached home Sergei Mikhaïlovitch's mother and two or three unavoidable guests were waiting for us; and we were not alone again until, on leaving the church after the ceremony, we were in the carriage on our way to Nikolski.

During the marriage ceremony the church was nearly empty. I saw Tatiana Simonowna standing by the choir, Macha in lilac ribbons and with tearful eyes, and two or three peasant girls who watched me curiously. Sergei Mikhaïlovitch I did not see, though I felt his presence. I listened to the prayers, repeating the responses aloud at the proper places, but they awoke no echo in my soul. I could not pray, but only gazed stupidly on the pictures, the candles, the embroidered vestments and the painted windows.

It was not until the pope put his hand on my head and said, that having baptized me, he was glad he had been permitted to marry me, that I awoke from my lethargy.

Macha and Tatiana Simonowna kissed me, and then I heard Grigoriy call the carriage, and felt astonished and frightened at the thought that it was all over without any extraordinary sensation having entered my mind or heart. We kissed one another, and our kisses seemed to me so strange, so foreign to our feelings, that I could not help thinking, 'Is it only that?'

We repaired to the open space in front of the church; the rumble of the carriage wheels awoke the echoes of the old building, and the fresh air swept across my face, whilst he, with his hat under his arm, assisted me into the vehicle. I could see the moon shining over the frosty evening scene. Then Sergei seated himself near me and closed the carriage door; the security with which he did so causing me a curious sensation of pain.

We started off. Ensconced in one corner of the carriage, I gazed through the window upon the fields and road, which lay white in the moonlight. I wondered at myself, and was shocked to find that no such blessing of peace was in my heart as might have been expected. Was this all? Had the hour from which I expected so much nothing more to give me?

I turned to Sergei Mikhaïlovitch with the intention of saying something, but could find no words. It was as if I had never felt one throb of tenderness for him, but only fear and dread.

'Until now I never believed it could really be true,' he remarked quietly, as if in answer to my glance.

'I am afraid,' I said; 'I don't know why.'

'Not of me, dear heart,' he answered, taking my hand and bending his head over it.

'Yes, of you,' I retorted. My hand lay passive in his, and my heart seemed as cold as a stone. Then he touched my hand with his lips; my heart began

to beat again, my eyes sought his in the gloom, and I suddenly felt that I no longer feared him, or else that this fear of mine had changed into a newer, stranger, and more passionate love than before, and that the power he had over me constituted the groundwork of all my future happiness.

VI

DAYS, weeks, two whole months sped by in the uneventful monotony of country life. Yet there had been enough bliss, enough excitement of feeling to have spread over a lifetime.

My day-dreams were indeed not quite realized, but the reality was more delightful than the conception had been. Of the serious fulfilment of duties, the stern abnegation of self, and the living for others which I had pictured to myself, there was nothing required. In truth, Sergei Mikhaïlovitch and I lived only for each other, utterly forgetful of every one else.

He, of course, left me for part of every day to drive into town or to attend to business on the estate, but I could see what trouble it cost him to tear himself away, and that comforted me during his absence.

He owned to me that when I was not beside him everything seemed to him destitute of interest; and it was the same with me. I read, I occupied myself with my music, with his mother, and with the schools; but I only did so because it was his wish, and as soon as I had to attend to anything in which he was not concerned, I felt weary and annoyed. He alone existed for me in the whole world. I considered him to be the best and most handsome of men, and I lived for him alone, bent upon remaining what he judged me to be—the first and most captivating woman that existed, endowed with all possible perfections. Indeed, I strove to be the best woman in the world.

He came to my room one day as I knelt before the sacred picture, took his seat by the table, and began to turn over the leaves of a book. I continued my prayers, but I felt his eyes upon me.

'Have you performed your devotions?' I inquired.

'Yes, but don't allow me to disturb yours. I will go away again,' he answered.

'Come, dearest, read this one prayer with me,' said I.

Then he knelt by me, letting his arms hang stiffly by his side, and he read the prayer with a serious face, pausing for an instant now and then to look at me, as if for encouragement. When he had finished, I laughed and embraced him.

'You treat me as if I were a boy of ten,' he said, flushing and kissing my hand.

Nikolski, our home, was an old-fashioned country house, where a long line of Sergei Mikhaïlovitch's ancestors had lived and died. The very atmosphere was perfumed with family memories which became my possession as soon as I entered the place. The household was directed by Tatiana Simonowna according to ancient usages. That our surroundings were splendid I cannot assert, but from the service to the furniture and the meals, all was rich, abundant, and good.

In the large drawing-room the furniture was arranged in geometrical order against the walls, which were adorned with family portraits, and the highly polished floor was covered with rugs manufactured in the house. In the small drawing-room there was an old piano, two chiffoniers which were not mates, a couple of divans, and several small tables inlaid with malachite.

In my room, which Tatiana Simonowna had arranged with especial care, the best furniture of the house had been placed, but it was of many varieties and of various centuries. I recall particularly an antique escritoire which I could not look upon at first without a sort of shudder, but which after a time became a trusted friend.

Tatiana Simonowna's voice was never heard in the house, yet everything moved with the precision of a well-regulated clock. The servants all wore soft flat slippers, for my nervous mother-in-law could not endure creaking soles or flapping heels. These servants were proud of their position in the family, were reverential in their demeanour towards their mistress, and almost caressing towards Sergei Mikhaïlovitch and me. Regularly every Saturday the floors were washed and the carpets beaten. On the first day of each month a *Te Deum* was sung, and holy water was distributed. The birthdays of my mother-in-law and Sergei were always celebrated with a banquet and a ball, as every one in the neighbourhood knew, and as had been the case ever since Tatiana Simonowna could remember.

My husband took no thought for household affairs. He rose early to see after the farm hands, even in winter, so that he was always off before I was awake. When he came in to breakfast, which we took alone, he was as full of fun and spirits as a boy.

Tatiana Simonowna always stayed in her room during the morning, exchanging greetings with us by means of messengers. How often I struggled with my desire to laugh, when her maid, with folded arms and grave face, repeated in monotonous, never varying accents: 'Tatiana Simonowna desires to know how you have rested after your long drive; the noble lady also wishes me to say that she was unable to sleep all night, because of a stitch in her side and the howling of a dog in the village. Furthermore, she would like to know how you have found the new bread which was not made this time by Terasse, but by Nickalasch, who, she thinks, has succeeded remarkably well for the first occasion. The worthy lady found the rolls particularly good, but the pastry was baked a trifle too much.'

Between breakfast and dinner Sergei Mikhaïlovitch and I saw little of each other. That was my time for practising and reading, and his for study or business. However, at the dinner hour, which was four

o'clock, we all assembled in the drawing-room. Mamma then came forth from her retirement with the visitors who chanced to be in the house, usually decayed gentlewomen, of whom, indeed, there was always one or two staying with us.

Sergei invariably offered his mother his arm, she just as invariably asking me to take the other, and in this fashion we entered the dining-room. Mamma always presided at the dinner table, and the conversation was usually stiff and constrained, though now and then some of my chatter with Sergei intruded upon the solemnity of this dignified meal.

After dinner Tatiana Simonowna sat in her large arm-chair in the drawing-room, smoking a cigarette or cutting the leaves of a new book. Sergei and I either read aloud or went to the music-room, for although we read a great deal in those days, still music remained our chief delight. When I played Sergei's favourite sonatas, he would go to the other end of the room, so that I could scarcely see him in the dim light; but often when he least expected it, I rose up and going to him found in the tender light of his eyes and in the flush on his cheeks, traces of emotion which he could not quite conceal.

The evening tea I usually prepared in the drawing-room, and it was a very solemn affair. It was very long before I felt at ease presiding over such a large samovar; I felt too young to occupy such a dignified post, and quite unfit for the responsibility of placing the glasses on the tray and saying, 'This is for Marya Minitschna,' or 'This is for Ivan Ivanovitch,' or of asking if the tea were sufficiently sweet, and sending one of the servants round with the sugar basin.

'Beautifully done, really quite like a woman,' my husband would remark, only increasing my confusion. After tea his mother would kiss us, and then we went to our own room, where we sat and talked till midnight in subdued tones, for fear that mamma might hear us, since 'early to bed' was one of her pet themes. Occasionally we grew hungry, and stealing quietly downstairs to the dining-room

sideboard, we searched for some cold supper to take to our own room.

Sergei Mikhaïlovitch and I lived almost as aliens in that large, old house, over which a stern spirit of the past moved, embodied in Tatiana Simonowna. Not only did *she* inspire me with a species of respect bordering upon awe, but I had the same feeling respecting the servants, the old pictures, and the very furniture.

When I look back I see that much of this unchangeable order and the superfluity of servants and guests was not only unnecessary but really burdensome. However, it made us cling the closer together, seeking refuge in our love, and we were both careful to repress any feeling of dissatisfaction with the established order of things. My husband, indeed, seemed to try to hide from himself any delinquency on the part of the servants.

For instance, Demetri Sideroff, the butler, was an inveterate smoker, and every evening while we sat in the music-room, he would slip into my husband's study and help himself to tobacco. It was amusing on these occasions to observe with what anxiety Sergei Mikhaïlovitch would come to me on tiptoe, and with shining eyes and uplifted finger point to Demetri Sideroff, who never dreamed that he was being watched; and how when Demetri had disappeared, my husband would kiss me and declare that I was charming, though this he did on every possible occasion.

Sometimes his patience and inexhaustible good-humour provoked me. I knew I should not have tolerated such things myself, and I fancied he was weak and childish.

'Ah! dear heart,' he said one day when I reproached him for his forbearance, 'how can I worry about such trifles when I am so happy? Besides, I learned long ago, that it is much easier to bend one's own will than that of another. I cannot be cross now; besides, the French say, *Le mieux est l'ennemi du bien*, as you know. And will you believe

it? I never hear the bell, receive a letter, or even wake up in the morning without remembering that life is passing and that changes must come in it; but better than it is now it can never be.'

I believed what he said, though I did not fully understand him, for I could not see any reason why we should not always be as happy as we were then, or even happier.

Two months passed by in this way, and winter, with its snow and storms, came upon us. Then, although Sergei Mikhaïlovitch was with me, I commenced to realize that our mode of life was monotonous, and that there was nothing new in it either for him or for me.

It seemed to me, indeed, as if we were always retracing our footsteps. My husband then began to busy himself about his affairs in a more marked degree than formerly, and it seemed to me that in the depths of his being there was some reserved corner to which he would not admit me. I felt irritated by his invariable serenity. I loved him no less, but my love stood still, and a strange, restless feeling troubled me. I needed excitement, movement; I longed for danger and self-sacrifice. I possessed some superfluous energy which did not find employment in the quiet life we led, and I experienced moments of sadness which I tried to hide from him, and transports of tenderness and gaiety which alarmed him. He observed me as he had formerly done, and one day he suggested that we should go to town for a time. But I would not hear of it; I asked him not to change our mode of life, not to touch the edifice of our happiness. And indeed I was happy; only I felt worried that my happiness did not call for any work or sacrifice such as I longed for. I loved my husband, I saw that I was everything in the world to him; but I wanted others to witness our love and to try to prevent my loving him, so that in defiance I might love him all the more. I found food for my mind and feelings at home, but conscious of my youth, and of a certain

need of motion, I did not obtain perfect satisfaction in the quiet life we led.

Why had he suggested that we should go to stay in town? If he had not said that to me, I should perhaps have understood that the feeling which oppressed me was but a baneful, chimerical one, and that I erred in giving way to it. However, the thought that I might rid myself of my weariness, simply by going to stay in town, involuntarily passed through my mind. On the other hand, this would mean taking him away from everything he liked. I was ashamed to do that; moreover, I did not want him to forgo his own delights simply to please me.

Time sped on. The snow heaped itself higher and higher around the house. Our lives moved on in the same unvarying monotony, while not far away a crowd of human beings struggled, rejoiced, and suffered. The worst of it, too, was that every day riveted the chains which bound us to this wearisome machine-like life, in which our very feelings ran in regular set grooves. In the morning we were merry, at mid-day we were polite, in the evening affectionate.

After a while these curious conflicts of mind worked upon my health. My nerves began to suffer. One morning, when I was feeling worse than usual, Sergei Mikhaïlovitch returned from his farm inspection out of sorts, a most unusual circumstance. I noticed it and inquired the reason, but the only answer I could obtain was, 'Nothing worth speaking of.' I afterwards learned that there had been some unpleasantness with the officials about our peasants, but at the time I imagined that he would not tell me his worry because he considered me too much of a child to understand business; so I turned away from him abruptly, and went to summon Marya Minitschna, who was visiting us, to breakfast. After this meal, which I finished as speedily as possible, I went into the music-room with my guest, and began chatting about some nonsense which did not interest me in the least.

Sergei Mikhaïlovitch followed us into the room,

and walked up and down looking at us. His presence worked on my nerves so that I talked louder and louder, laughing almost hysterically. Every remark that Marya made seemed to me remarkably comic. Finally Sergei left the room without having made any observation, and no sooner had the door closed behind him than my mirth vanished, so suddenly, indeed, that Marya asked me what was the matter. I could not answer, but sat down ready to cry.

'What must he think of me?' was my thought. 'Will he think it nonsense or something worse? If he would only ask me, so that I might tell him!'

I felt my tears oppressing my heart, and I began to grow angry with him. But I shrank from giving way to such feelings and repaired to his study.

He was writing when I entered. On hearing my step he raised his eyes for a moment, and then went on quietly with his writing. His scrutiny did not please me, and I took up a book in place of speaking to him.

He again paused in his work to look at me.

'Katia, you are out of temper,' he said.

I replied with an icy glance, as much as to say, 'That is no matter to you.'

He shook his head and laughed softly; but for the first time in my life I did not give smile for smile.

'What was the matter with you this morning?' I asked. 'Why would you not tell me?'

'A mere trifling annoyance. Some peasants have been sent to the town——'

But I would not allow him to finish. 'Why did you not tell me before breakfast, when I asked you?' I inquired.

'I should have said something absurd, for I was vexed.'

'But I wished to know *then*.'

'Why then?'

'Because you think I can never be of any use to you in your business perplexities.'

'How can I think that?' he said, throwing aside his pen. 'I think, indeed I *know*, that I cannot live

without you. You are not only a help to me, you are my all. I live only for you, and if I find life sweet and pleasant it is only because I have you—because——'

'Yes, yes, you think I am nothing more than a child, to whom you must always say smooth things,' I interrupted, and with such petulance that he gazed at me in astonishment. 'I have no patience left me. You have enough for both though—if, indeed, you haven't too much,' I continued fretfully.

'Listen,' he said quickly, as if afraid I might say too much. 'We——'

'No, I will listen to nothing,' I replied, although I was longing to have a good talk with him. But it was so delightful to disturb his repose. 'I do not wish to *play* at life any longer. I want to live in earnest as you do; to be equal with you, as I have a right to be.' I stopped short at this point, the sudden, quick flush on his cheek warning me that I might be going too far.

'In what way are you not my equal? Is it because I refuse to tell you stories about drunken peasants and their brawls?'

'Not only that,' I replied.

'Understand me, dearest,' he rejoined. 'I know by long experience that these cares, be they ever so trifling, cause trouble and worry, and it is because I love you that I wish to shield you from every annoyance. That is the business of my life. Do not, I pray, make it impossible for me.'

'You are right, of course; you always are,' I impetuously rejoined. It angered me to see him so calm and unmoved again, when my heart and brain were in a tumult of conflicting emotions.

'Katia, what can be the matter with you? It isn't a question as to who is right. Are you ill, or have you anything against me? Don't answer too hastily, but think it over, and let me know how I have offended you.'

What could I say? How could I open my heart to him? The thought that he had immediately

divined me, that I was like a child before him, that I could not do anything without him understanding and foreseeing it, now worried me more than ever.

'I have nothing against you,' I answered. 'But I am tired of this sameness, this dreary monotony of life. I wish it could be changed. But of course it can't be, you will say, and of course you will be right again.'

I looked at him as I said this. The arrow reached the mark. Pain and dread were visible upon his face.

'Katia,' he began in a low, deeply moved voice, 'what we are now saying is no jesting matter. Our whole future life may hang upon it. Why will you torture me so?'

I interrupted him again. 'Spare yourself the trouble of explanations, since I know exactly what you will say, and as I remarked before, you are always right.' I said this quite coldly, as if it were not I, but some perverse spirit speaking with my lips.

'If you could only know what you are doing!' he said, in a faltering voice.

I began to cry and my heart grew lighter; I felt ashamed and repented of my words, but I dared not look at him, lest his eyes should express the scorn and anger which I knew I deserved. However, when I did at last turn towards him, a gentle, loving look was fixed on me. Then I took his hand and said: 'Forgive me, I do not know what I said.'

'Yes, but I know, and you told me the truth.'

'What was it, then?'

'That we must start for St. Petersburg immediately. There is no hindrance just at present.'

'As you like.'

He took me in his arms and kissed me tenderly.

'Forgive me. I have wronged you, though unintentionally.'

I sat for a long while at the piano that evening, while he walked up and down murmuring to himself. It was a habit he had, and I often asked him to repeat his croonings to me. Sometimes it was a bit

of poetry, sometimes only nonsense, but it always furnished me with the key to his state of mind.

'What were you saying just now?' I asked.

He paused in his promenade, and smilingly repeated two lines of one of Sermontoff's poems:

> 'But he, the fool, he longed for the storm,
> As if in the storm his rest to find.'

'He is more than human! He knows everything! How can I help loving him?' I thought. Rising, I took his arm and began to walk about with him, trying to take the same long strides that he did.

'Well, is it not so?' he asked smilingly.

'Yes,' I whispered softly.

Then a frolicsome mood came over us. We took longer and longer steps, finally walking into the drawing-room on tiptoe, to the astonishment of mamma and the indignation of Demetri Sideroff, who was making preparations for tea.

Two weeks later, before the holidays, we were in St. Petersburg.

VII

OUR journey to St. Petersburg, the week we spent in Moscow, making acquaintance with my own and Sergei Mikhaïlovitch's relatives, passed before me like a pleasant dream. All was so novel and bright, so illumined by my husband's love and presence, that our still country life seemed far away and half forgotten before we were fairly settled in our new abode.

To my surprise and pleasure, instead of the stiff and formal reception I had expected from acquaintances and relatives, I was met with such simple and hearty cordiality as to charm and put me at my ease instantly. Moreover, contrary to my anticipations, in numerous circles of society, even in those of the highest rank, I discovered that my husband possessed connections which he had never mentioned to me;

and I often thought it strange and even disagreeable to hear him pass severe judgments upon people who seemed to me to be so nice. I could not understand why he treated them so curtly, and why he avoided making acquaintance with people whom, to my mind, it was advantageous for one to know. I should have thought the more worthy people one knew the better it was, and all of these were apparently worthy people.

The day before we left Nikolski my husband had said to me, 'Here in the country I am a small Croesus, but in St. Petersburg I shall be less than rich. We can remain there until Easter, but we must not mingle much in gay society, lest we should be tempted to indulge in undue expenditure.'

'Very well,' I had answered. 'We can just go to some concerts and the theatre, and come back to Nikolski before Easter.'

But these resolutions were forgotten soon after reaching St. Petersburg. I suddenly found myself in a bright new world, so surrounded with new interests and new amusements that I became entirely oblivious of my past life and the plans which we had formed. My true life I felt was just commencing.

The unrest, and yearning for I knew not what, which had tortured me in the country now vanished as if by magic. My love for my husband became more subdued, and I no longer tormented myself with doubts as to whether he loved me less than at first. Though, indeed, I could not have any rightful misgivings on that score, since he understood my every thought, and fulfilled my every wish before expressed.

Often, after I had played the part of hostess with many inward tremblings, he would exclaim to my great delight: 'Excellently done, my child! Quite beautiful!'

Shortly after our arrival he wrote a letter to his mother, and when he called me to add a postscript, he told me not to read what he had written, which, however, I very naturally did immediately, despite, or on account of, his prohibition. It ran thus:

'You would scarcely recognize Katia; I myself am half puzzled at times. Where did she acquire her charming graciousness of manner, her suave politeness? And withal she is so good and simple. Everybody is delighted with her, and I love her more than ever, if that be possible.'

'Ah!' thought I, 'I also love Sergei Mikhaïlovitch more than ever, if that be possible.'

My reception by my unknown relatives was unexpectedly flattering. Here was an uncle, yonder an aunt, who heaped favours upon me. One declared that I had not my equal in St. Petersburg; another thought that I need only have the will to become the leader of society. My favourite among them all was the Princess Demikoff, a cousin of my husband, a thorough woman of the world, who was no longer young, and who loaded me with flattery until my brain was turned.

The first time she came to invite me to go to a ball with her, Sergei Mikhaïlovitch looked at me with a scarcely perceptible smile, and artfully asked if I wished to go. I nodded in token of assent, and blushed.

'Blushing like a criminal making confession,' he teasingly remarked.

'You told me that we could not afford to go into society, and that it was distasteful to you,' I answered with a smile and a supplicating glance.

'If you desire it very much, we will go,' he said.

'But perhaps it would be best not to do so.'

'Oh! it is not wrong to visit the gay world once in a while. The danger is in going too frequently and indulging in social ambition which cannot be gratified. But we will go to this ball certainly,' he concluded.

'To tell the truth, I never wished to go anywhere so much as to this ball.'

We went to it, and the pleasure I had anticipated was more than realized. It seemed to me as if I were the central pivot of the whole affair; as if the vast gallery had been lighted up for me alone; as

if the music played for my especial benefit, and as if the throng had gathered solely to gaze at me in ecstasy. Everybody, from my hairdresser and waiting-maid, to my partners in the dance, and the old gentlemen who walked through the rooms, all gave me to understand that I had fascinated them, and, indeed, the universal testimony, so I heard from my cousin, was that I was utterly unlike any other women, being as simple and fresh as a country blossom.

I was so intoxicated by these comments that I urged Sergei Mikhaïlovitch to go with me to several other balls, which he did very willingly for a time despite his principles, and seeming to rejoice in my success.

But by and by he grew weary of society, and the excitement made him uncomfortable. Still I did not bother myself over this, and when I occasionally felt his penetrating glance fixed on me, I would not understand. I was so fascinated by the admiration of strangers, the elegance, amusement, and general change, that his steady, serious influence over me seemed lost. It was pleasant to me to mingle in society, not merely side by side with him, but with a feeling that I was on a higher level than he was; and withal to love him with increased strength and independence. And I could not understand that he disliked to see me enjoying social successes. When I entered a ballroom, and saw all eyes turned towards me, a feeling of enhanced pride and self-satisfaction arose in my heart. He, however, used on such occasions to hurry away from my side, and disappear in the crowd of bystanders, as if he were ashamed that I belonged to him.

'Only wait,' I would say to myself, as I followed him with my eyes, 'only wait till we are at home again, and I will prove to you for whose sake I wish to be beautiful, and whom it is I love.'

Once in a while the possibility of my husband being jealous flitted across my mind, but he was always so composed, and the young men I met were

so insignificant when compared with him, that the idea vanished as soon as conceived. However, the attention which so many people bestowed on me in the drawing-rooms I visited proved a source of pleasure and gratified my vanity, and even caused me to consider that it was very meritorious on my part to continue loving my husband, as I did, with increasing assurance and freedom of manner.

'I saw how engaged you were with the Countess Ablomovitz last evening,' I said to him one morning after a ball, shaking my finger at him threateningly. The lady of whom I spoke was one of our best friends and well known in St. Petersburg. My intention was to tease him a little, because he was so particularly silent that day.

'Katia, how can you speak to me like that?' he said, between his clenched teeth. 'Such jests are not seemly on your part. Leave them to others. Those artificial ways can only spoil our love and respect for each other, if they have not already done so.'

I felt ashamed and kept silent.

'Well, Katia, what do you say to that?' he asked.

'Our love and respect for each other are not spoiled, and never can be,' I answered. This I believed with all my heart when I said it.

'God grant it!' he replied. 'Still, I think it is time we returned home.'

After this he never again alluded to our return to Nikolski. I knew how weary he was of city life, but I remembered also how I had pined in the country, and I inexpressibly dreaded the return to such a state of existence.

The winter passed with astonishing rapidity, and contrary to our expectations we kept the Easter feast in St. Petersburg. On the Tuesday after Easter, when our trunks were packed ready for our departure, my husband, who had completed his purchases of presents and effects needful to us in the country, became quite gay and affectionate

again. However, his cousin, the Princess Demikoff unexpectedly arrived to entreat that we should remain until after Saturday, to attend a ball given by the Countess Woronski.

'The countess is especially desirous of your company,' she said to me, 'for Prince M—— says that you are the most beautiful woman in Russia, and he refuses to attend the ball unless you are to be there. Indeed, I think it against all reason that you should persist in burying yourself alive, before this final and most magnificent entertainment of the season.'

While the princess was speaking Sergei Mikhaïlovitch had been talking to a servant at the other end of the room, and I was not certain whether he had heard her.

'Well, what shall you do, Katia?' persisted our cousin; 'will you go?'

'We are going to Nikolski to-morrow,' I replied, glancing towards my husband. Our eyes met and he turned quickly away.

'I will persuade your husband to remain,' urged the princess.

'But that would upset all our plans,' I said, though longing to yield.

'Would it not be better for you to go and pay your respects to the prince this evening?' asked my husband, with an amount of excitement in his voice and manner which I had never seen in him before.

'Ha, ha!' laughed our cousin. 'He is actually jealous. It is charming to see him roused from his placidity for once. But really, Sergei Mikhaïlovitch, it is not only on account of the prince that we want Katia so much.'

'She can do as she likes,' my husband rejoined, leaving the room. I saw that he was strangely excited, and so I would not give the princess any definite answer.

When she was gone I went in search of my husband, and found him pacing up and down the library with a thoughtful face.

'He is thinking of Nikolski and of our merry breakfasts in our own cosy little room,' I said to myself, 'and of his fields, his peasants, and our delightful evenings in the music-room, followed by our stolen supper. No, no! not all the balls in the world are worth his tender love, nor would I give one of his merry smiles for the flatteries and attentions of a thousand princes.'

I was on the point of telling him that I would adhere to our original intention of going home on the morrow, when he caught sight of me, and wrinkled his forehead in a most forbidding manner. The gentle, thoughtful expression disappeared from his face, and was replaced by a harsh and gloomy one. Then suddenly he assumed a look of penetrating wisdom and quiet protection. He never liked to let simple human nature appear upon his face; with me, he wished to remain a kind of demi-god perched upon a pedestal.

'What is the matter, my dear?' he carelessly asked, as he turned and faced me.

I did not answer at first. I felt annoyed at seeing him feign with me, instead of remaining as I liked him.

'Do you care to attend that ball on Saturday?' he asked.

'I should have liked to, but our boxes are packed, and it would not be agreeable for you,' I replied. I spoke coldly, for his nonchalant tone angered me, and I was vexed also at his having prevented me from making the sacrifice voluntarily.

He also looked at me coldly; indeed, never had he looked at me or spoke to me so coldly before.

'I shall not go before Wednesday next week,' he said; 'and I will give orders to have everything unpacked.' As usual, when excited, he paced up and down the floor with quick jerky steps.

'I really cannot understand you,' I observed, following his movements with my eyes. 'Why do you speak to me so strangely? I am quite ready to sacrifice my pleasure to yours; why do you treat me so coldly?'

'You offer me a *sacrifice*!' he said, emphasizing the last word. 'Well, on my side I bring you one, so we are quits. What more could be expected from any happy married pair?'

It was the first time that I had ever heard such mocking words fall from his lips; but their effect was to anger and harden me.

'You are greatly changed,' I said, with a sigh. 'What is the matter with you; are you angry with me? It can't simply be a matter of this ball; you must have some old grievance against me. Tell me frankly what it is.'

'What will he say?' I asked myself, remembering with satisfaction that he could not lay the slightest indiscretion to my charge. As I spoke, I stepped into the middle of the room, where he would be forced to pass me in his promenade.

'He will come, embrace me, and all will be well,' I hoped. But he paused in his walk at the other end of the room, and looked at me.

'You do not understand me?' he inquired.

'No.'

'Then allow me to explain to you that the emotion now working in my heart for the first time, is one which I cannot immediately repress.'

He stood quite still as he spoke, as if half shocked himself at the roughness of his voice.

'What do you mean?' I asked, crying in spite of myself.

'I mean this. I feel indignant that, because the prince has found you to his taste, you should run after him, forgetful of your husband, of yourself, of your womanly dignity. You cannot even understand what your husband must feel, since you yourself have lost all consciousness of dignity. Far from it, indeed; you come and declare to your husband that you are ready to sacrifice yourself, which is the same as saying: "I should be delighted to be able to please the prince, but I will forgo that satisfaction in consideration of my husband's prejudices."'

As he spoke he grew more and more earnest, being

excited by his own voice and words. His face glowed, and I felt afraid of him, but my self-esteem was wounded and I would not give way.

'I have been expecting this outbreak for some time,' I said. 'Continue!'

'What *you* may have expected, I do not know, but *I* have expected the worst, watching you day after day in this whirlpool of luxury, idleness, and dissipation. I have dreaded being brought to shame, as has happened to-day. Your friend comes and tears my heart with her soiled hands, making a mockery of my jealousy—my jealousy of whom? Of a man of whom you know as little as I do! And you can't understand me. You offer me a sacrifice—I am ashamed of myself and of you—a sacrifice, indeed!'

'How like a man,' I thought. 'I have done nothing to offend, and yet he would like me to fall on my knees and acknowledge that he is justified in his anger. I will not do it.'

'No, I will not offer you any sacrifice,' I said, my nostrils dilating and my cheeks burning. 'I shall go to the Countess Woronski's on Saturday.'

'I wish you much enjoyment,' he cried with scorn. 'Between us, however, all is at an end. You shall not torment me any longer. I was foolish enough to——' At this point his lips quivered, and, making a visible effort, he refrained from finishing his sentence.

I both hated and feared him at that hour. How gladly would I have returned scorn for scorn, contempt for contempt, but I dared not speak lest I should end in bitter sobs, which would have been an untold humiliation.

I left the room silently, but I was scarcely out of the sound of his footsteps before I realized the possibility of my having sundered the happy bond which had once united us. I half resolved to go back to him, but I was afraid that he would interpret any compromise on my part into an acknowledgment of my being in fault, and he in the right. Would he

not grant me pardon with proud tranquillity! Ah! why had he so offended me, he whom I had loved so well!

So I stayed alone in my chamber, recalling the sting of every word, and weeping silently, until tender, subdued thoughts came and swept away the harsh ones that I had been cherishing.

When I took my seat at the dinner table, where Mr. O——, a visitor, was sitting with my husband, I felt that a great gulf indeed had opened between us. Mr. O—— inquired how soon we purposed leaving St. Petersburg.

Before I could reply Sergei Mikhaïlovitch answered: 'Next Wednesday. We are going to a ball at the Countess Woronski's on Saturday. You intend to go, I believe?' This he said to me, with a sneering, contemptuous expression.

'Yes, I expect to go,' I replied, looking at him timidly.

That evening, after Mr. O—— had left, Sergei Mikhaïlovitch came to me and offered me his hand, exclaiming: 'Pray forgive what I said to you this morning.'

I took his hand, a trembling smile flitted over my face, and my eyes filled with tears, but he abruptly withdrew his hand and took a seat at some distance off, as if he feared a scene.

'Is it possible that he still thinks he was in the right?' I pondered, and I had, on the tip of my tongue, a request for a frank explanation, and for permission not to go to the ball.

However, my husband suddenly exclaimed: 'I must write to my mother that our journey has been postponed, otherwise she will be anxious.'

'And when shall we start?'

'Next Wednesday.'

'I hope nothing else will occur to prevent it,' I said. But he gazed at me with such a curious look in his eyes that it prevented all further conversation.

We attended the ball, and to all appearance we were on affectionate terms again, but it was in reality

very different to the past. I was seated between two ladies when the prince approached me, and I was, of course, forced to rise. As I did so, I glanced at Sergei Mikhaïlovitch, who averted his face. I was conscience-smitten, and it was extremely unpleasant to feel myself colouring and growing confused under the scrutiny of the prince. Our conversation was brief. There was no room for him to sit down near me, and when he left me, he said he would be glad to make my husband's acquaintance.

Later in the evening I saw them standing together in another part of the room. The prince must have been saying something about me, for he looked towards me with a smile. Suddenly Sergei Mikhaïlovitch grew scarlet, bowed low, and abruptly left the prince. 'What will he think of me, and especially of my husband?' I thought. I felt sure that almost every one present had witnessed how the prince had been treated by Sergei Mikhaïlovitch. 'God knows what they must have thought,' I said to myself; 'possibly they have guessed at the state of affairs between us.'

My cousin drove me home, and on the way I told her of the difficulty we had had on account of this unfortunate entertainment. She endeavoured to soothe me, saying that such little storms occurred in every married life, and passed over leaving no trace behind. She also blamed my husband as being over reserved and haughty, in which opinion I concurred, for it seemed to enable me to understand his character better, and to judge his conduct in a calmer fashion.

But when I was at home and alone, these words lay on my conscience like a stone, and I felt that the chasm which separated us was becoming wider and deeper, all through my own fault.

VIII

AFTER that day there came a great change in our mode of life. We no longer felt at ease when alone together; there were certain questions which we avoided discussing, and the presence of a third party was always hailed as a relief. As soon as there was the slightest allusion, in the course of conversation, either to balls or to country life a strange light danced in our eyes, and we felt too much embarrassed to look at one another. It seemed as if we both understood where and how the gulf parted us, and as if we feared to approach the brink of the precipice. I felt convinced that he was proud and headstrong, and that I must be very circumspect to avoid any clash with his failings. And he, on his side, was convinced that I could not live apart from society, that country life did not suit me, and that he must resign himself to my unfortunate tastes. Thus, on either side, we avoided any direct allusion to all unpleasant subjects, and we judged each other wrongly. We had long since ceased to be the most perfect beings in the world for one another; on the contrary, we compared ourselves to other people around us, and pondered secretly, each from his own point of view, over the failings of our characters.

On the day before that appointed for us to leave for Nikolski I was taken seriously ill, so that we simply rented a country house near St. Petersburg. When I had somewhat recovered, Sergei Mikhaïlovitch went to visit his mother. I begged to be allowed to accompany him, but he persuaded me to remain, on account of my health, although I knew that the real reason was his unwillingness to be alone with me in our old home, so full of tender associations.

My time passed slowly and heavily without him, and yet on his return I realized more keenly than ever the immense difference between our present and past relations. We each had our separate cares

and interests, which we never attempted to share with one another, although we were as punctilious in fulfilling each other's wish as if we had still been lovers. Whenever we remained alone together, which did not often happen, I felt neither pleasure, nor trouble, nor embarrassment: it was as if I had been alone by myself. Still, I knew that he who was with me was not a stranger but a worthy man, my husband, whom I believed I knew as well as I knew myself. However, I now expected nothing from him: he was simply my husband, nothing more, and there could be no possible change in the situation. Moreover, I no longer had any time for reflection.

Fashionable life, with its glare and glitter, took the place in my heart once occupied by my husband and my home. I had scarcely an hour to call my own from morning till bed-time. This existence neither amused nor wearied me: I accepted it as a necessity.

Three years went by in this way, marked, however, by two important events: the death of my mother-in-law and the birth of my first child.

At first the motherly instinct was so strong within me, that I fancied it to be the beginning of a new and delightful life. But when the novelty had worn off, and I was able to go out again, this feeling faded away by degrees, ending finally in a cold fulfilment of my maternal duties.

For Sergei Mikhaïlovitch, however, the birth of his child seemed the renewal of his youth. He was again the gentle, home-loving man of other days, devoting all his fun and tenderness to the boy.

Frequently, when I entered the nursery, in my ball-dress, to say 'good night' to the little one, I would find my husband there; and his stern, reproachful look made me suddenly feel ashamed. I felt frightened at the indifference with which I treated my child, and I asked myself whether I were different to other women.

I loved the dear little boy certainly, but to sit by

him and tend him for hours was more than I could endure.

My mother-in-law's death was a sore trial to my husband. I sincerely sympathized with him, and I missed her to a certain degree; but I must confess that it was pleasanter for me at Nikolski without her iron-rule customs.

The third year after our first journey to St. Petersburg, we went to Baden-Baden to spend the summer. I was then about twenty-one. My health was excellent; we had abundant means; my toilet was elegant; the weather was glorious, and I was happy! It was not such happiness, however, as had made life so sweet to me during the first few months at Nikolski; still, it was happiness. I feared nothing, hoped for nothing; my cup was full to the brim, and my conscience was easy.

Among the throng of visitors crowding Baden-Baden that summer, there was scarcely one deserving any special notice. About the only difference between them was that some were old, others young; some, fair Englishmen; others, moustachioed Frenchmen. The only one to whom I gave a second thought was an Italian, the Marquis Michaelli, who had attracted my attention by the bold manner in which he expressed his admiration for my person. He allowed no opportunity to escape of meeting me, dancing with me, riding out and going to the casino with me, and he incessantly repeated that I was charming. From my window sometimes I saw him strolling round our house, and the boldness of the glances which he darted at me with his sparkling eyes often made me blush and avert my face. He was young, handsome, and elegant; and bore a certain resemblance to my husband, particularly in the brow and smile, though the quiet, gentle expression of my husband's mouth was changed in the Italian to something coarse and animal. Despite myself, I felt afraid of this man, and thought oftener of him than I ought to have done. Sergei Mikhaïlovitch had become acquainted with him, and associated

with him more intimately than with other people, among whom he simply figured as his wife's husband, retaining all his haughty coldness of manner.

A short time before the close of the season, I was taken ill and confined to my room for a fortnight. On the first occasion that I visited the casino after my recovery, I heard of the arrival of Lady Spelton, an Englishwoman, famous for her beauty. I had no lack of cavaliers on this occasion, but a much greater number were collected about Lady Spelton, concerning whose grace and loveliness all lips were eloquent. She certainly was very captivating; and yet I was disagreeably impressed by the look of self-sufficiency apparent on her countenance. Everything which had formerly seemed so gay thoroughly wearied me that day. On the morrow, Lady Spelton made up a party to visit the Castle, but I was not one of it. I was left almost alone in the hotel, and felt desolate enough. I could have cried gladly, and felt anxious to return to Russia as soon as was practicable. A new and unhealthy feeling had taken possession of me, but I would not confess it to myself. I pretended that I was not well, and from that day I kept aloof from society, only walking to the wells or driving out with Lyona Maruscha, one of my Russian friends. Sergei Mikhaïlovitch was then at Heidelberg, only coming now and then on a visit to Baden-Baden. As soon as I had finished drinking the waters we were to return to Russia.

One day when Lady Spelton and most of the visitors had gone off on a hunting party, I drove in the evening to the Castle with Lyona Maruscha. As our carriage crept slowly up the hill under the century-old chestnut trees which shaded the drive, and between which one distinguished a lovely prospect all aglow with the rays of the setting sun, we began to talk seriously, which was contrary to our wont. I had known Lyona Maruscha for a long while, but this was perhaps the first time that I really appreciated her society. We talked of our children, our Russian home life, of the vanity and emptiness of

our present existence. Under the pleasurably painful influence of this conversation we entered the Castle grounds.

Behind the walls it was shady and cool, but the rays of the sun still lingered on the ruins, and through the gateway we could see the charming landscape as in a frame. Each word and footstep was re-echoed under the vaults. We sat down upon some stones to rest, and at that moment heard some voices. They soon became more distinct, and I fancied I heard my name. Involuntarily I listened, and each word came to us with terrible distinctness. The persons chatting together were the Marquis Michaelli and his most intimate friend, a Frenchman. The latter was comparing Lady Spelton and me, and analysing our respective charms. He said nothing depreciatory, yet the blood rushed to my brain as I heard him coldly counting up my defects and good points.

I had had a child, he said, whereas Lady Spelton was only just nineteen. I had beautiful hair, Lady Spelton a graceful figure. Besides, Lady Spelton was of almost royal blood, while I belonged to one of those petty noble families of Russia which are superabundant.

He concluded with the remark that I had shown great good sense and discretion in leaving the field to my rival, since I was dead and buried so far as Baden-Baden society was concerned.

'When she goes I go too,' said the voice with the Italian accent.

'Happy mortal, to still be capable of loving,' tauntingly answered his companion.

'Loving!' repeated his friend. 'Yes, I cannot exist without loving, and this romance has but just begun. I must finish it. I always finish these affairs.'

'Well, here 's luck to you,' said the Frenchman.

I heard no more, for they went away. In a short time, however, their footsteps were heard from the other side; they descended the steps, and a few

minutes afterwards came out by a side door, expressing great surprise at finding us there.

I blushed when I met the marquis's eyes, and it was very painful to be obliged to accept his escort when we left the Castle. Still, I could not refuse, and while Lyona went on ahead with the Frenchman, we walked together towards my carriage.

I was greatly annoyed at the Frenchman's opinion of me, although he had only put my own thoughts into words; but I was still more thoroughly vexed and disgusted by the remarks of the marquis, while the possibility of his knowing that I had overheard his conversation made his presence almost unendurable to me.

Without looking at him or listening to what he said, I hastened after Lyona Maruscha as speedily as possible, letting my fingers barely touch his arm. He made some trite remark upon the beautiful view, his pleasure at meeting me, and something else I did not hear.

My thoughts were all the time with my husband, my child, and Russia! I longed for my solitary room at the Hôtel de Bade, but Lyona Maruscha walked slowly, my carriage was at a distance, and my escort seemed to slacken his pace, as if resolved to be alone with me. I tried to walk faster, but he positively held me back, pressing my arm.

At last Lyona Maruscha and her escort turned a corner of the road, and we were alone. 'Excuse me,' I said coldly, taking my hand from his arm; but the lace on my mantle caught on his sleeve-button. He leaned over to unfasten it, and his gloveless hand touched my arm. A curious sensation shot through my veins; I looked at him, wishing to express the hatred I felt for him, but I only succeeded in showing him that I was afraid. His moist, burning eyes were fixed on mine, with his hands he caught hold of my arms just above the wrists, and then he began to stammer something—that he loved me, that I was all in all to him, his hands grasping my arms still more tightly.

It grew dark before my eyes. I trembled, and the words with which I sought to repel him died away on my lips. Suddenly, I felt a kiss on my cheek. Unable to move, trembling and icy cold, I waited for something to restore me to action—I knew not what. This helpless terror endured but a moment; but that moment was dreadful. I saw the marquis's low, broad forehead, so like my husband's, his handsome nose, his long, waxed moustache, his smooth cheeks, and brown neck, and I felt that, although I hated and feared him, although he was a stranger to me, something of his trouble and passion was being imparted to myself.

'I love you,' he repeated, while the faces of Sergei Mikhaïlovitch and my babe flitted before my mind's eye, just as in an hour of danger the remembrance of long-dead dear ones returns.

Happily for me, at that moment Lyona Maruscha called me. The sound of her voice restored my power of action. I snatched my hands from the marquis's, and hastened to my friend without a glance or a word. We took our seats in the carriage, and then only did I look at him. He lifted his hat, and made some remark. He must have felt the unspeakable aversion my eyes expressed, for he coloured slightly, man of the world as he was.

My present seemed hopeless, my future dark, for I felt the kiss of the marquis burning my cheek as a brand of shame. And when I thought of my husband and my child, I was in despair indeed.

When I finally reached my room, the loneliness was unendurable. I could not swallow the tea which I ordered, and without knowing why, I began, in feverish haste, to pack my boxes, intending to go to Heidelberg to my husband.

It was only when I was seated in the railway carriage with my maid, and when the fresh night air sweeping through the open window fanned my throbbing head, that I was able to think. For the first time, during several years, I recalled with longing our quiet country life; for the first time I

asked myself what happiness my husband had enjoyed since we had given it up, and then my conscience upbraided me. Ah! why had he not tried to keep me with him, why had he practised dissimulation, why had he always avoided any explanation, why had he offended me? Why had he not tried the power of his love upon me? Was it that he no longer loved me? However, whether he had cause for self-reproach or not, the stranger's kiss remained branded upon my cheek, and I still seemed to feel it.

The nearer the train drew to Heidelberg, the more I dreaded the meeting with Sergei Mikhaïlovitch.

'I will confess all—all,' I resolved, bursting into tears, 'and surely he will forgive me.' But in truth I did not know what to say, nor did I really think that he could forgive me.

When I entered his room, and saw his quiet but surprised face, I could neither make a confession nor implore forgiveness. And yet sorrow and repentance weighed upon my heart.

'Why have you come, my dear? I intended to join you to-morrow,' he said, and then, evidently startled by something he saw in my face, he continued: 'What is the matter? What is the matter?'

'Nothing,' I replied, as quietly as I could, though it was hard work to repress my tears. 'I have left Baden-Baden for good, and if it suits you, we will return to Russia to-morrow.'

'What has happened?' he said, looking at me steadily and attentively.

I blushed involuntarily and lowered my eyes. In his there shone a presentiment of something outrageous, an omen of violent anger. I feared his thoughts, and with an amount of dissimulation of which I had believed myself incapable, I hastily replied:

'Nothing has happened, but I was lonely, and have realized at last the injustice I have done you in forcing you into a sort of life so foreign to your tastes. I feel that I have acted very badly towards

you,' I added, with tears in my eyes. 'Let us go to Nikolski and remain there for ever.'

'Spare me a scene, dear friend,' he said coldly. 'It is necessary for us to go home, for we are short of cash. But *for ever* is a long time, and you will doubtless soon tire again of our monotonous country life. But now you must have a cup of tea. That will do you good,' he added, rising up to ring for a servant.

The knowledge that he had good cause to doubt me lay heavy on my heart. I dreaded the suspicious glances which he gave me. 'No, he will not, cannot understand me,' I thought, and I escaped from his presence as quickly as I could. I longed to be alone to weep, weep, weep!

IX

OUR house at Nikolski, which had so long remained deserted, was once more full of life; but it was not the life of former times; Sergei's mother was dead, and we were thenceforth alone, face to face with one another. And now it was no longer solitude that we required; our loneliness weighed upon us. The winter went by, full of suffering for me, and I only felt well again after the birth of my second boy.

My relations with Sergei Mikhaïlovitch were cold, but friendly; every book, every picture, every divan reminded me of what I had once possessed and what I had lost. It was as if an unforgiven transgression separated us; you might have said that he wished to punish me for something, but how was I to ask forgiveness without knowing what had been my error? It occurred to me at times that he only feigned indifference in view of worrying me, and that the old feelings of bygone times still abided in him. I tried to bring about an explanation, but he eluded it. It was as if he suspected me of dissimulation, and feared any display of sentimentality as something

ridiculous. His eyes and his manner seemed to say to me: 'I know everything. You have nothing to tell me; I am quite aware of what you would like to confide to me. I know that you talk in one way and act in another.'

At the outset I felt offended at seeing him so afraid of being frank with me, but by degrees I accustomed myself to the thought that it was not lack of frankness in his nature, but rather a feeling that he saw no necessity for frankness. On my side, I could no longer have told him point-blank that I loved him; or have asked him to read prayers with me; or have called him when I was playing the piano. Our life was no doubt regulated with a certain regard for each other's comfort and convenience, though we really lived apart, he having his occupations in which I felt no interest, and I having my little nothings, of which he took no notice and upon which he passed no comments. As for the children, they were, perhaps, yet too young to serve as a bond between us.

Spring came; Macha and Sonia arrived in the country for the summer; there were some repairs to be made at our house, and we were invited to stay with them at Pokrovski.

It was still the dear old house, with its sunny terraces, the piano in its accustomed place in the bright drawing-room, and my own little chamber with its white hangings, and the faint perfume of my girlish dreams. Two beds now stood in the room. In one slept my stout, noisy Kokoscha, in the other Vania's rosy cheek pressed the pillow.

Often when they were sweetly sleeping, I sat by their beds, and from every corner of the quiet room silent ghosts of my girlhood would float to meet me, and old well-known voices would sing me long-forgotten songs. What had become of all those spirits, those sweet, prophetic songs of maidenhood?

What I had scarcely dared to hope for had been mine, but the sweetness had become bitterness while in my grasp. Still, outwardly all was unchanged. The same garden, the same footpaths, the same

nightingale-song from the bushes under the window, the same lilacs in flower, the same silvery moon flooding earth and sky with light—all the same and yet so changed! What had once been so bright and warm had become cold and cheerless. As in the olden days, I sat and chatted with Macha in the morning-room; but her face was pale and serious, her eyes dark with care and sympathy, and instead of praising Sergei Mikhaïlovitch's goodness, we sat in judgment upon him; and instead of wishing that all the world were as happy as ourselves, we asked for the hundredth time how things could possibly have changed so sadly. He was always the same, though the wrinkle across his forehead had become deeper, his hair greyer about the temples; and now his deep eyes, constantly averted from mine, seemed covered as with a cloud. I too was still the same, but there was no longer any love or desire for love within me. No need for work, no self-satisfaction. How distant, how incredible now seemed my religious transports of former times, my old love for him, and that plenitude of life which I had experienced. I no longer understood what had once seemed to me so luminous and true—the happiness of living for others. Why for others, when I did not even care to live for myself?

I had almost entirely given up music since our residence in St. Petersburg, but the sight of the old piano revived my early taste. I had not been well one day, and had stayed alone while Macha and Sonia had gone to Nikolski with Sergei Mikhaïlovitch, to overlook some alterations being made in the old house.

Towards the evening, as I was awaiting their return, I sat down to the piano, and opening the sonata, *Quasi una Fantasia*, I began to play it. When I had finished the first movement, I looked mechanically towards the corner where, years before, Sergei had always sat—but now the place was vacant!

I saw through the open window the light of the setting sun tinting the lilac blossoms, and the breath

of flowers stole into the room, according harmoniously with the mournful, sadly-sweet tones of the instrument. Then I hid my face in my hands, and sat so for a long time, recalling the past with bitter pain and keen longing.

'Can it be,' I thought, 'that my life is ended!' and to avoid further thought I commenced to play again—still the same Andante. 'My God,' I prayed, 'if I have sinned, forgive me, and restore to me the happiness I have lost. Purify my soul. Teach me what I ought to do, how I ought to live.'

While I was still playing a rumble of wheels resounded outside, then I heard a soft, familiar footstep on the terrace; finally all was still. But the sounds had not awakened in my heart the feeling of other days. I went on playing, and when I had finished I again heard footsteps, this time behind me, and a hand was laid gently on my shoulder.

'How it pleases me to hear that sonata again!' said Sergei Mikhaïlovitch.

I gave no reply.

'Have you had tea?'

I shook my head, not daring to look at him, for fear he might see any signs of emotion on my face.

'Macha and Sonia will soon be here,' he resumed. 'They preferred to walk, the horse was so restless.'

'We will wait for them,' I answered, going out on to the terrace, hoping that he would follow me, but he went off to hunt for the children. Once more his presence, the sound of his voice, had dissuaded me from the belief that all was lost for me. 'What more can I desire?' I thought. 'He is kind and gentle; an excellent father, an excellent husband. I myself cannot tell what I lack.'

Going on to the terrace I took my seat on the very same bench upon which I had sat on the night of our betrothal. The sun had set, but behind the trees shimmered a rosy streak of evening light, and over house and gardens hung a heavy cloud. The wind had died away. Not a leaf or blade of grass stirred. The rose bushes, which were not yet in

bloom, stretched out their long branches over the black, freshly turned up beds, the frogs croaked, and the nightingales called to each other from the neighbouring thickets.

Before long Sergei Mikhaïlovitch came out and took a seat beside me.

'I am afraid Sonia and Macha will get wet,' he said. 'It looks as if it would rain.'

'Yes; it looks so,' I answered, and then we were both silent. In the meantime the clouds sank lower and lower. Suddenly a drop of rain fell upon the awning, a second splashed on to the garden path, and then faster and faster the water fell upon the thirsty earth and waiting shrubs. The frogs and nightingales were silent now, except one bird whose nest was in a bush under the dining-room window.

Sergei rose up as though he were going away.

'Where are you going?' I asked. 'It is pleasant here.'

'I must send some umbrellas to Macha and Sonia.'

'It is not necessary: the shower will soon be over.'

He agreed with me, and we remained leaning over the balustrade. The cool water sprinkled upon my neck and hair. The rain cloud, which was becoming lighter each moment, burst above us; then after the persistent sound of the downpour came the pit-a-pat of the last drops. Again the frogs began to croak, again the nightingales shook their wings and began to call each other from among the damp bushes, now on one side and now on another. All had once more become serene.

'How enjoyable it is,' said Sergei, leaning over the balustrade, and passing his hand over my damp hair.

This simple caress caused me a strange feeling. I felt inclined to cry.

'What more can a man require?' he resumed. 'I feel so delighted at this moment that there is nothing wanting. I am completely happy.'

'You did not talk to me like that when I only

needed such words to fill my heart with felicity,' I thought. 'However great your happiness may have been, you then said that you wanted it to be greater and greater still. And yet now you are calm and contented, whereas my heart is full of bitterness, and my eyes are ready to shed tears!'

'Life is also kind to me,' I said aloud, 'but I feel sad because it is so kind. I always seem so strange; I always long for something, and yet here everything is so nice and quiet. Is it possible that no grief ever mingles with your delights, as if for instance you regretted something of the past?'

He withdrew his hand, which was resting upon my head, and remained for a moment silent. 'Well,' he said to me at last, 'long ago, in the spring seasons, I spent whole nights lying awake and dreaming of my hopes and longings. But then everything was before me, whereas now it is behind. And now I am pleased with what exists; that is perfection for me,' he concluded, with so much assurance that, although I was sorely pained by his words, I felt that he was speaking the truth.

'Then there is nothing that you desire?' I asked.

'Nothing impossible.'

'Do you regret nothing of the past, then?' I asked, my heart sinking within me.

He was again silent for a moment, and I saw that he wished to answer me truly.

'No,' he said, at last. 'I am thankful for the happiness I had then, but I do not mourn for it now.'

'But would you not recall it if you could?' I insisted.

'I no more wish for it than for the wings of a bird. Both are impossible.'

'And you never reproach either yourself or me?'

'Never.'

'Listen to me,' I said, taking his hand and compelling him to look at me. 'Why did you allow me a freedom I did not know how to use? If you had restrained me, as you might have done had you only chosen, we should have been happy still.'

'Are we not happy, then?' he asked in surprise.

'Happy? No! you have withdrawn from me your love, your esteem, and your confidence. When I recall the days that are past, I cannot believe that you love me now. Nor was this change my fault alone. You allowed me, an ignorant girl, to wander in strange paths. I have now ended by understanding what is necessary in life. For a year I have been struggling to return to you, but you invariably repulse me, pretending that you do not understand. Yes, you would like to force me again into those ways which I hate, to your misery and my own.'

'What do you mean?' he said, visibly shocked.

'Did you not say yesterday, don't you continually say, that life here isn't suited to me, and that we must go to St. Petersburg at the end of the month? St. Petersburg, which I now detest!'

He looked at me with increasing surprise.

'Instead of helping me,' I continued, 'you have avoided being frank with me, you have never said a kind, sincere word. And should harm ever befall me, you will reproach me as if it were all my fault.'

'Stop, stop!' said he, coldly and severely. 'You must not speak like that. I see, though, that you are badly disposed towards me, that you do not——'

'That I do not love you! Dare to say it!' I replied, and tears rushed from my eyes. Then I seated myself on a bench, and hid my face with my handkerchief. 'And that is how he understands me,' I thought, striving to repress my sobs. 'It is all over, our old love is dead'—thus sounded a voice in my heart.

Meanwhile he did not draw near to me, or try to console me. What I had said had wounded him. His voice was curt and quiet when he replied.

'I do not see why you should reproach me thus,' he began. 'If I do not love you as in the early months of our married life, it is the fault of time.

Each age has its special kind of love. When I first knew you I passed many sleepless nights, thinking of you alone. In St. Petersburg, and again at Baden-Baden, I spent frightful nights striving to tear that love from my heart, for it had become only a torment. But I was unable to destroy it as I wished, though I grew calmer; and now I certainly love you still, though it is in a different way——'

'Do you call this love? It is torture,' I rejoined. 'Why did you allow me to go into society knowing it to be so pernicious. It is the fault of society that you have ceased to love me.'

'No, society was not the guilty one,' said he.

'Why did you not avail yourself of your rights?' I resumed. 'Why did you not tie me up, kill me even? Death would have been preferable to the loss of all my happiness, and there would have been shame the less.'

Then I again began to sob and hid my face.

At that moment Macha and Sonia, gay although wet, arrived, laughing and talking, on the terrace. On perceiving us, however, they discreetly held their peace and immediately withdrew.

The silence lasted some time longer; I shed all my tears and felt relieved. Then I looked at him. He was seated with his head resting on his hand, and it seemed as though he wished to say something to me. However, he contented himself with heaving a deep sigh.

I approached him and drew his hand away from his face. Then he turned his eyes upon me with a pensive look.

'Yes,' said he, as if pursuing a train of thought, 'for all of us, and particularly for women, it is necessary to taste the cup of frivolous life before partaking of real existence. In that matter no one is contented with another's experience. In your earlier days you had not dabbled much in the science of graceful frivolities; so I let you learn a little more of it for a time, and indeed I had not the right to prevent your doing so.'

'Why did you let me live a life of frivolity if you loved me?' I asked.

'Because it was necessary that you should learn things for yourself; you would not have believed what I might have told you.'

'You reasoned a great deal, I see,' said I. 'You can have loved me but little.'

We again relapsed into silence.

'What you have just told me was hard to hear, but it was the truth,' he suddenly resumed, rising up and beginning to walk along the terrace. 'Yes, the truth. I was guilty,' he added, pausing in front of me. 'I ought not to have loved you at all, or else I ought to have loved you in a more simple fashion.'

'Let us forget everything, Sergei,' said I timidly.

'No, what has passed cannot return; one can never retrace one's steps,' he answered, and I noticed that his voice softened as he spoke.

'All has come back again,' I said in my turn, laying a hand upon his shoulder. He took it and pressed it.

'I did not tell the truth,' he began, 'when I pretended that I did not regret the past. I mourn for the love which cannot be recalled. Who is guilty in the matter? I don't know. Affection may have remained, but it is no longer the same; it lacks strength and tone. Recollection and gratitude still survive, but——'

'Pray do not speak like that,' I interrupted. 'Let love be born anew, such as it was formerly. Cannot that be?' I asked, looking him full in the face. His eyes had become serene and calm as they turned upon mine. They had quite lost their thoughtful expression.

Whilst I spoke, I already realized that what I longed for was no longer unobtainable. He smiled at me in a peaceful, gentle way. It was like the smile of an old man, a father, I thought.

'How young you still are and how old I am already,' he said. 'I no longer possess what you are

seeking for. Why deceive oneself?' he added, still smiling.

I stood beside him and felt peace descending into my heart.

'Don't let us try to repeat life over again,' he continued. 'Don't let us cheat ourselves. It will be a great deal to have no trouble or anxiety left us. We have nothing more to seek. We have found a happy lot already. Our duty now is to show *him* the right way,' he added, pointing to little Vania, who at that moment appeared on the terrace in his nurse's arms. 'That is what we must do, my dear,' concluded my husband, as he leant forward and kissed me on the hair.

It was not a lover's embrace; it was that of an old friend.

From the garden arose the perfumed evening freshness, distant sounds vibrated in the air, then all was still and the stars twinkled in the heavens. I looked at him and suddenly I felt infinite relief in my heart. It was as if I had experienced some successful operation, and had been rid of some troublesome nerve that had made me suffer. I then clearly and calmly understood the feeling that had swayed me during that phase of my life, now for ever past; and I realized not only that its return was impossible, but that it would have been painful and odious to me could I have experienced it anew. I had had enough of that time, it had been so painful to me despite all its seeming pleasures, and it had lasted so long, so long.

'It is tea time,' now said my husband gently, and we entered the drawing-room together.

On the threshold I again saw the nurse with Vania. I took the child in my arms, I covered up his little bare feet, I pressed him to my heart and kissed him. He moved his little arms, stretching out his tiny wrinkled fingers, and he opened his sleepy eyes as if looking for some one, or trying to recollect something. Suddenly his eyes turned upon me, a spark of intelligence illumined them, and then his lips

parted in a smile. 'You are mine, mine,' I thought, with a delicious feeling which passed through my whole frame, and I pressed him to my bosom. Then I kissed his cold little feet, his chest, his arms, and his head, upon which there was scarcely any hair. My husband approached me. 'Ivan Sergeiovitch,' said he playfully, and he began to tickle the little fellow's round dimpled chin.

But I drew away with him. 'He belongs to no one but me,' I said.

Sergei Mikhaïlovitch laughed, and for the first time for a long, long while I found it pleasant to meet his gaze.

Thus ended my romance with my husband. The old passionate emotions remained a dear memory; but a new feeling of love for my children and their father laid the foundation for another life, happier in a different sense to that which had gone before. And this existence still lasts, and has an endless charm for me, for I have learnt that true happiness can only be found at one's fireside, amid the pure delights of family life.

THE DEATH OF IVAN ILIITCH

I

IN the great palace containing the law-courts, during a temporary suspension of the sitting devoted to the Melvinsky suit, the judges and procurators had gathered together in Ivan Egorovitch Schebek's private room. The subject of conversation was the famous Krassovsky case.

Feodor Vassilivitch waxed warm in demonstrating how it had not a leg to stand upon. Ivan Egorovitch took the opposite side, while Piotr Ivanovitch, who had refrained from the first from engaging in the discussion, glanced over a paper which had been just brought in.

'And so, gentlemen,' said he, 'Ivan Iliitch is actually dead.'

'Indeed!'

'Look here, read for yourself,' said he to Feodor Vassilivitch, as he handed over the crisp perfumed sheet, upon which was printed the following notice, encircled by a black border: 'Prascovia Feodorovna Golovina announces with deep grief to her relatives and friends the death of her beloved husband, Ivan Iliitch Golovine, member of the Court of Appeal, who died on the 4th of February 1882. His remains will be interred on Friday at 1 P.M.'

Ivan Iliitch had been the colleague of the assembled gentlemen, and had been held in esteem by them all. He had been ill for several weeks, and his complaint had been reported incurable.

His appointment had been kept open for him, but in case he did not recover, Alexieff had the next chance of it, while Vinnikoff and Schtabel had an

eye to Alexieff's post. Thus, on learning the tidings of Ivan Iliitch's death, the first thought of each of the assembled gentlemen was for its probable consequences in the way of nominations and promotions for themselves and their friends.

'Now I am sure to get Schtabel or Vinnikoff's berth,' thought Feodor Vassilivitch. 'I have had the promise of it for a long time past, and the promotion will increase my salary by eight hundred roubles, to say nothing of the sum allowed for expenses.'

'I must get my brother-in-law from Kaluga appointed one of us now,' mused Piotr Ivanovitch; 'that will please my wife, and then she will never be able to say again that I do nothing for her family.'

'I thought he would never leave his bed again,' continued Piotr Ivanovitch, aloud. 'What a pity it is!'

'But what was the exact nature of his illness?'

'The doctors cannot tell. At least they all profess to know, but each says something different. When I last saw him, I fancied that he would get over it.'

'For my part, I have never set foot in his house since the rejoicings: I was always intending to call and see him.'

'Had he any private means?'

'I think that his wife has something, but not much.'

'Well, we shall have to call. It is a long way to their house.'

'A long way from where you live, you mean. You are a long way from everything.'

'Why, he cannot forgive me for living on the other side of the water,' said Piotr Ivanovitch with a smile, as he looked at Schebek.

They next began to talk of the distances between everything in large cities, and then they returned into the court.

Apart from the reflections which arose in each gentleman's mind as to the possible changes to which this death might give rise, the mere fact of the demise

of an estimable friend produced in them the usual feeling of satisfaction that this piece of ill luck had befallen him rather than themselves.

'You see, he is dead, and I am not,' was the prevailing feeling or reflection.

Moreover, Ivan Iliitch's acquaintances, those whom he had called his friends, could not help reflecting that they had now a tiresome social duty to discharge, that of attending the funeral after paying a call of condolence on the widow.

Feodor Vassilivitch and Piotr Ivanovitch had been most intimate with Ivan Iliitch. The latter, indeed, had been a fellow pupil with the deceased at the Law Schools, and had considered himself under obligations to him. So Piotr, after giving his wife the news at dinner, and telling her what he thought of the chances of getting his brother-in-law appointed as one of his colleagues, donned his dress-coat and set out for Ivan Iliitch's residence. Upon reaching the steps leading up to the house, he found a private carriage and two *isvostchiks* [1] standing outside.

In the vestibule on the ground floor, near the hat stand, the coffin-lid, decorated with tassels and silver fringe dipped in whitening, was reared up against the wall. Two ladies, dressed in black, stood there taking off their little *shoubas*.[2] One of them was Ivan Iliitch's sister, whom Piotr Ivanovitch knew, but the other he had never seen before. Schwartz, one of his judicial colleagues, was on the point of coming down the stairs, but as soon as he caught sight of the new arrival, he stopped short and gave a wink, as much as to say: 'Ivan Iliitch has managed matters badly; *we* have done better!'

Schwartz's face, with his English whiskers and meagre profile appearing above his black coat, retained its usual solemn grace, and there was something peculiarly piquant about his air of assumed solemnity, which accorded ill with his jovial disposition; at least so thought Piotr Ivanovitch.

He allowed the ladies to go up first, and then

[1] Cabs. [2] Fur mantles.

slowly mounted the staircase behind them. Schwartz had remained above. Piotr Ivanovitch understood why; it was evident that his colleague wanted to arrange about their rubber that evening.

The ladies turned towards the widow's room, and Schwartz, with lips solemnly pursed and a jovial glance, indicated the chamber of death to Piotr Ivanovitch by a twitch of his eyebrows.

Piotr Ivanovitch entered, uncertain, as people usually are on such occasions, as to what he ought to do. He was aware, however, that the sign of the cross never comes amiss, but as to what bows he ought or ought not to make he felt doubtful; so he chose an intermediate course. Upon entering the room he crossed himself and bowed slightly. At the same time, he took stock of everything, that is, as far as the movements of his head and arms would allow.

Two young men, one of whom was a collegian, a relative, it appeared, of the deceased, were leaving the room, crossing themselves as they went out. An old woman was standing there motionless, and a lady, whose eyebrows were strangely elevated, was whispering something in her ear. A diligent and resolute sacristan in a tunic was reading aloud, in a tone which would brook no opposition, and meanwhile Guerassim, the house moujik, was sprinkling something on the floor, as he paced with short steps in front of Piotr Ivanovitch.

The latter, just as he caught sight of the servant, detected the faint odour of a decomposing corpse. In the course of the last visit that he had paid to Ivan Iliitch in his study, he had noticed this moujik, who had acted as his master's nurse, and of whom the deceased had been very fond. Piotr Ivanovitch went on crossing himself and bowing slightly, in a manner which might be taken to be meant as much for the dead man as for the sacristan and *eikons*. Then fearing lest he might be too profuse with his crosses, he paused, and began to examine the corpse.

It was stretched out as corpses always are, and

lay a heavy mass, with all its limbs rigid, surrounded by the coffin lining. The head, which had sunk to rest on the pillow for the last time, displayed, as is usual with the heads of corpses, a waxen brow, with bare patches over the sunken temples, and a nose protruding so far as almost to conceal the upper lip. What a change! The deceased had grown even thinner since Piotr Ivanovitch had last seen him; though, on the other hand, death made his face look finer, and certainly more dignified than when he had been alive. Its expression seemed to convey that he had done the right thing, and in the right manner too. Moreover, there still lingered on his features a look of reproach, an exhortation like 'Remember!' addressed to the survivors.

This reminder seemed to Piotr Ivanovitch out of place; at any rate he did not choose to take it to himself. He all at once felt ill at ease, so that he abruptly crossed himself again; and then turning on his heel, with unseemly haste as he himself felt, he made for the door.

Schwartz stood waiting for him in the adjoining room, with his legs planted apart, and his hands behind his back, playing with his opera hat. A single glance at Schwartz's clean, elegant, and beaming countenance instantly restored Piotr Ivanovitch's self-possession. He felt that Schwartz was quite superior to this sort of thing, and that such overwhelming impressions barely influenced him. Indeed, Schwartz's whole manner demonstrated that this incident of Iliitch's funeral could be no sufficient pretext for 'suspending the sitting,' in other words, that there was nothing to prevent their clapping a fresh pack of cards on the table that very evening as soon as the footman brought the lights. 'In fact, there is no reason why this incident should prevent us from enjoying ourselves.' These were the very words that Schwartz addressed to Piotr Ivanovitch, as he suggested in a low tone that they should meet at Feodor Vassilivitch's.

However, it did not seem as if Piotr Ivanovitch

was destined to play a rubber that evening, for at this moment the widow made her appearance.

Prascovia Feodorovna, a shortish, stoutish woman, in spite of her efforts to appear the contrary (she grew wider all the way from the shoulders downwards), was dressed entirely in black, with her head covered with lace, and her eyebrows as strangely elevated as those of the lady standing opposite the coffin. She came out of her rooms with some other ladies, and as she accompanied them into the apartment where the corpse lay, she exclaimed: 'The service for the dead is about to begin; pray, go in.'

Schwartz bowed vaguely and remained standing as before, neither accepting nor declining the proposition. Then Prascovia Feodorovna, who had recognized Piotr Ivanovitch, let a sigh escape her, came up to him, grasped his hand, and said: 'I know that you were a real friend of Ivan Iliitch's.'

She fixed her eyes on him as she spoke, and waited for a fitting reply.

Piotr Ivanovitch was conscious that as it had been the correct thing for him to cross himself just before, so now he was expected to clasp her hand, heave a sigh, and murmur: 'Indeed I was!' He did so, and, having carried out this programme, he felt that the desired result was obtained. He was touched, and so was she.

'Come with me,' she said; 'I want to speak to you before the service begins; give me your arm.'

Piotr Ivanovitch offered it, and they passed into the rooms behind, sweeping past Schwartz, who winked at his friend with a look of commiseration.

'It is all over with our whist now,' said his jovial glance. 'But don't be annoyed, we will find another partner; maybe you will be able to come and take a hand when you have finished.'

In response Piotr Ivanovitch heaved a still deeper and sadder sigh; and Prascovia Feodorovna, mistaking the cause, pressed his arm gratefully.

On reaching the drawing-room, upholstered in pink

cretonne, and feebly lighted by a solitary lamp, they seated themselves near the table; she on a couch, and he on a low ottoman, the worn springs of which gave way uncomfortably beneath his weight. Prascovia Feodorovna wanted to ask him to take another seat, but imagined that it might be improper to do so under these trying circumstances. As her visitor sat down upon the ottoman, he remembered that Ivan Iliitch, when refurnishing his drawing-room, had asked his advice about this very pink cretonne with which the furniture was upholstered.

The widow, in passing the table on her way to the couch, caught her black lace mantilla in the carved wood-work. Piotr Ivanovitch rose to free it, and the ottoman, thus lightened, began to undulate and start up beneath him. The widow tried to unhook the lace herself, whereupon Piotr Ivanovitch sat down again, crushing the rebellious settee into subjection. Then, finding that Prascovia Feodorovna could not manage to set herself free, he rose again, and once more the ottoman trembled and groaned. As soon as the widow had settled herself, she took out a clean cambric handkerchief and burst into tears, while Piotr Ivanovitch, whose composure had been restored by the accident with the lace and his contest with the ottoman, maintained a severe demeanour. Fortunately this embarrassing situation was terminated by Sokoloff, the butler, coming to announce that the plot of ground in the cemetery which Prascovia Feodorovna had thought of purchasing would cost two hundred roubles.

She at once stopped crying, and, looking at Piotr Ivanovitch with a victimized air, remarked in French that all this was most painful to her. He signified, by a silent gesture, that it could not be otherwise.

'I beg that you will smoke,' she observed, in a tone of mingled generosity and depression.

Then she began to discuss the question of the burial plot with Sokoloff.

Piotr Ivanovitch lighted a cigarette, and heard her ask the price of different plots, and choose the one

that suited her best. Then, when she had given instructions about the choir, Sokoloff withdrew.

'I arrange everything myself,' said she, as she moved the albums to one side of the table.

She had noticed that the ash from Piotr Ivanovitch's cigarette was about to fall on the table, and she promptly pushed the ash-tray towards him, and then added:

'It seems to me hypocritical to pretend that sorrow prevents my attending to practical matters; on the contrary, although they cannot console me, they at least divert my mind from my grief.'

She then caught up her handkerchief once more, as if to prepare for another fit of weeping, seemed to make a sudden effort to control her emotion, and calmly resumed:

'But I have something to say to you.'

Piotr Ivanovitch bowed, without giving too much liberty to the springs of the ottoman, which were already beginning to work again.

'He suffered terribly during the last few days.'

'Indeed! did he suffer so much?' asked Piotr.

'Yes, frightfully. Throughout his last hours—I do not say his last moments—he never stopped screaming all the while. For three days and nights it never ceased. It was past endurance. I cannot imagine how I stood it. He could be heard through three doors. Oh! what I have gone through!'

'And was he conscious?' asked Piotr Ivanovitch.

'Yes,' she replied in a low tone, 'to the very end. He took leave of us a quarter of an hour before he died, and even begged of us to take Volodia away.'

The idea of the sufferings of a man whom he had known so intimately as a boy, and afterwards as a student, and then as his partner at the card-table, suddenly terrified Piotr Ivanovitch, conscious though he was of this woman's hypocrisy and his own. Once more he saw the deceased's forehead, his nose overhanging his lip, and he trembled for himself. 'Three days and nights of intense suffering, and then to die! And that might happen to me now, at any

instant—to my own self!' he thought. And then for a moment he felt startled and alarmed. But, almost involuntarily, the idea occurred to him that this thing had befallen Ivan Iliitch and not himself; that it could not, nay, must not befall him; that if he gave way to such reflections, he would become a prey to gloomy impressions, which he ought to resist just as Schwartz did.

These considerations restored his serenity; he asked with much interest for some details respecting Ivan Iliitch's last days, as if death were an accident peculiar to Ivan Iliitch, and did not concern himself in the least.

After a detailed account of the terrible bodily sufferings really undergone by the deceased, and which only interested Piotr in so far as they operated on Prascovia Feodorovna's nerves, the widow thought it time to proceed to business.

'Ah, Piotr Ivanovitch, how painful it is, how terribly painful, terribly painful,' she said.

Here her tears began to flow again.

He sighed, and waited till she had used her handkerchief, and when she had done so, he remarked:

'Indeed it must be!'

Then she began to speak again, and acquainted him with what was evidently her chief anxiety. This was the amount of money which she hoped to obtain from Government in consequence of the death of her husband. She professed to ask Piotr Ivanovitch's advice about getting a pension; but it was obvious that she had already studied the question thoroughly, and knew more than he did about the best way of obtaining the largest possible sum from the Treasury. She would have been glad, however, if he could have furnished her with information as to how she might secure a still larger amount.

Piotr Ivanovitch endeavoured to discover some way of doing so, but after considering for a moment, and blaming, as in duty bound, the parsimony of Government, he told her that he thought it would be impossible to get more than she had stated. Upon

this she sighed, and evidently sought a pretext for dismissing her visitor. He took the hint, put out his cigarette, rose up, grasped her hand, and left the apartment.

In the dining-room, where Piotr Ivanovitch recognized a timepiece which Ivan Iliitch had bought at a broker's, and of which he had seemed so proud, he met the priest and some other persons he knew who had come for the service; and here he also saw Ivan Iliitch's daughter, a handsome girl. Her slim waist looked smaller than ever in her black dress. She seemed sad, but resolute, and almost angry, and she greeted Piotr Ivanovitch as if she owed him a grudge. Behind her, looking equally annoyed, stood her betrothed, an examining magistrate, a wealthy young man whom Piotr Ivanovitch knew but slightly. Piotr made a melancholy bow to the affianced couple, and was about to pass on into the room where the corpse lay, when he caught sight of the collegian's small face peering up the stairs and reminding him forcibly of the deceased. The lad was just the picture of the little Ivan Iliitch whom he, Piotr Ivanovitch, had known at the Law Schools. His eyes were red with crying, much like those of a slovenly lad of thirteen or fourteen. The boy shrank back with a grave and bashful demeanour upon seeing Piotr Ivanovitch, who greeted him and then passed on to the dead man's room.

The service was commencing. There were tapers, sighs, incense, tears, and sobs.

Piotr Ivanovitch stood erect, and fixed a melancholy gaze upon his boots. He never once glanced at the corpse, but struggled against the depressing influence till it was all over; then he was one of the first to leave the room.

There was no one in the vestibule. However, Guerassim, the house moujik, promptly came out of the chamber of death, turned all the shoubas over with his vigorous arms until he found Piotr Ivanovitch's, and held it out for him.

'Well, brother Guerassim,' said the visitor, by

way of making some remark, 'what a misfortune this is!'

'It is God's will! It is what must happen to us all,' returned Guerassim, showing his closely-set white teeth. Then he opened the door briskly, like a man who has his work before him, called the coachman, helped the gentleman into his carriage, and sprang back to the head of the steps, as if actuated by the thought of how much he had yet to do.

Piotr Ivanovitch felt delighted to breathe the pure air after all the odour of incense, death, and disinfectants.

'Where am I to drive?' asked his coachman.

'It is not very late; I will go to Feodor Vassilivitch's,' replied Piotr.

So he did; and there he found the whist-players, and was in time to take a hand.

II

IVAN ILIITCH'S story was as simple, as commonplace, and also as terrible as possible.

He had died at the age of five-and-forty, a member of the Court of Appeal. He was the son of an official whose career in the Ministries at St. Petersburg had procured him one of those situations which, when a man has ceased to be of any use, he is allowed to retain for the sake of his long services in the past, and the rank he has reached: sinecures yielding tangible salaries of from six to ten thousand roubles, upon which a man may live to a very advanced age.

Such had been the Councillor Ilia Efimovitch Golovine, a useless member of various useless administrations. He had had three sons, of whom Ivan Iliitch was the second. The eldest had followed much the same career as his father, but in a different department, and was already approaching that professional age when appointments drop in merely by the force of acquired velocity. The third son

had proved a ne'er-do-well. He had tried several callings, and had failed in them through his own fault; now he was employed on a railway line, and his relations, especially his sisters-in-law, not merely objected to meet him, but even affected to ignore his existence. The brothers had a sister who had married Baron Gref, a St. Petersburg official like his father-in-law.

As for Ivan Iliitch, he was regarded as the phœnix of the family. He was less reserved and methodical than his elder brother, and less incorrigible than the youngest one, thus forming a happy medium between them. Bright, intelligent, and well-mannered, he had pursued his studies at the Law Schools at the same time as his younger brother. The latter never completed his, for he was expelled when in the fifth class. Ivan Iliitch, however, went through the whole course.

While at college his character showed itself what it remained throughout his future life: he was clever, quick-witted, genial, and sociable, while strict in discharging whatever he regarded as his duty. It may be stated that duty, for him, meant whatever was required by his hierarchical superiors.

His disposition had never been obsequious, but from his early childhood he had always felt drawn to people of good social standing, just as a moth is drawn to a candle, and he had easily acquired their views and manners, whilst insinuating himself into their companionship.

The temptations of youth and early manhood passed over him without leaving many traces. Although he indulged in voluptuous pleasures, and was influenced by vanity, his well-balanced nature kept everything within certain limits.

At college he had committed actions which he had regarded at the time as ignoble; which had indeed made him utterly despise himself at the moment of their accomplishment. Subsequently, however, he perceived that persons of repute did as much without seeming to be in the least degree ashamed,

and then, if he did not go so far as to glory in such deeds, he tried at least to forget them, and was not much disturbed by his conscience.

When he left college, with a tenth-class grade,[1] his father furnished him with the necessary money for his uniform. Ivan Iliitch ordered it from Scharmer, the great tailor, added the tiny medal inscribed '*respice finem*' to his other trinkets, took leave of the prince who was patron of his college, and also of the rector, and dined with his friends at Donon's. Then, equipped with new trunks, linen, clothes, razors, and other toilet necessaries, as well as a plaid, all bought or ordered at the leading shops in St. Petersburg, he started for the provinces as an official with a special mission to the governor, a piece of rare luck which he owed to his father.

On reaching his province Ivan Iliitch arranged matters so as to lead the same easy, agreeable life that he had led at college. He discharged his official duties, attended to his business, and, at the same time, lived in the pleasantest and most respectable manner possible. Sometimes, when deputed by his superiors, he visited the districts, and proved admirably suited for his part, treating both his superiors and his subordinates in a dignified manner. His missions, especially those relating to the *Raskolniki*,[2] were discharged with exemplary accuracy and probity, upon which he could not help priding himself.

While thus professionally engaged, he maintained, in spite of his youth and gay temperament, an official reserve akin to austerity. But in his social relations he often showed himself jovial, sprightly, and 'excellent company,' as was remarked by the governor and his wife, at whose house he was a welcome visitor.

The elegant young official had formed other

[1] In Russia civil officials are classified into fourteen grades, corresponding very nearly to those in the army.

[2] A tolerably numerous sect of old believers in Russia. When the patriarch Nikon proceeded, in 1654, to revise the Scriptures, a certain number of the faithful declared themselves in favour of the original version, and separated from the Orthodox Church. They formed the Raskolnik sect.

relations certainly, notably with a lady who threw herself at his head. There were also certain passages with a pretty milliner, and there were pleasure parties with passing aides-de-camp, and excursions to remote streets after supper. Still, all this was done with such an air of good breeding that no one could think of qualifying it by any opprobrious epithet, and it all passed muster under the phrase, 'youth will have its fling.'

It was all done with clean hands, clean linen, French expressions, and, above all, in the best society, so that it met with the approval of the best people.

This was the life led by Ivan Iliitch for five years, till the time came for him to be promoted. Some new courts of justice were being instituted and some fresh men were required. He became one of these fresh men. An appointment as examining magistrate was offered to him, and he accepted it, regardless of its removing him into a fresh sphere, where he would have to form new connections.

His friends stood by him. They all had themselves photographed in a group, and they presented him with a silver cigarette case, after which he left for his new post.

As an examining magistrate he was just as well-bred as he had been as an official entrusted with an extraordinary mission, and by carefully keeping his public duties apart from his private life, he acquired just the same consideration.

As to his new occupation, it was much more interesting and attractive to him than the old one had been. He had certainly enjoyed passing, in the uniform made for him by Scharmer, before the solicitors and officials who were tremulously waiting to be received by the governor, and who envied him the privilege of stepping at once into his excellency's private room, to smoke and drink tea with him. But there had been very few people upon whom he could bring his authority to bear, only some *ispravniks*,[1] or some *raskolniks*, whenever he went on a

[1] Police officials.

mission. He liked to treat the poor fellows dependent on him in a courteous and almost friendly manner; he liked to show them that, though it lay in his power to crush them, his behaviour was kind and simple.

Now that he had become an examining magistrate, he ascertained that every one, without exception, up to the very highest personages, lay in his power; he had only to write a few words on a paper with a certain heading, to bring into his presence any proud and self-sufficient aristocrat either as defendant or witness, and this aristocrat, however exalted his rank, would have to stand, unless he, Ivan Iliitch, chose to invite him to be seated, and he would be bound to answer his questions whatever they were.

Ivan Iliitch certainly never abused this power; on the contrary, he tried to temper its use. Still, the consciousness that he possessed it, and that it depended on him alone to temper it, constituted the real interest and attraction of his new functions.

As to the examinations themselves, he was quick in taking up anything fresh, and he excelled in eliminating all the circumstances extraneous to any case; he could draw up a clear account of the most complicated affairs, giving a thoroughly impersonal character to his reports, and never obtruding his own opinion. Moreover, he was most scrupulous in observing all the necessary formalities. These were quite novel at the time, for he was among the first magistrates who found themselves called upon to apply the Code of 1864.

When Ivan Iliitch changed his residence, he struck out a fresh line for himself. He kept the minor provincial authorities at a respectful distance, and formed a better connection for himself among the magistrates and gentry of the place. He also began to censure the Government slightly, and posed as a Moderate Liberal possessed of Western culture.

Meanwhile he paid as much attention as ever to his dress; the only change about his appearance was that he left off shaving his chin, and grew a beard.

He led a very pleasant existence; the members of the Liberal Association which had received him into its bosom formed a close brotherhood; his salary was higher than formerly, and among other new amusements he took very kindly to whist, playing with so much spirit and intelligence that he almost always found himself a winner.

After two years had passed by in this position, he met the lady who was destined to become his wife. Prascovia Feodorovna Michel was the most intelligent and attractive girl whom he had met in society, and he found a pleasant diversion from his magisterial duties in paying attentions to her.

In the days when he had acted as an official on an extraordinary mission he had been very fond of dancing, but since becoming a magistrate he had danced very rarely. Whenever he did foot it, it was to show that, although he was a partisan of the new school and a magistrate of the fifth class, he could dance better than most people. Thus it occasionally happened that he danced towards the end of a party with Prascovia Feodorovna, and it was thanks to his talent in this respect that he made his conquest. She fell in love with him. He had never made up his mind to marry; but when this young girl fell in love with him, he began to ask himself why he should not take a wife? Prascovia Feodorovna was of good family and prepossessing appearance; besides which, she had a little money. The match suited Ivan Iliitch well enough, though he might have been fairly expected to make a better one. Still, he had his official salary, and had reason to hope that she would bring him an equivalent in money on her side. She was well connected, pretty, and decorous in her behaviour. To say that he married her because he had fallen in love with her, and that their views were mutually sympathetic, would be as erroneous as to maintain that he married for the sake of pleasing the members of his club.

Two reasons led Ivan Iliitch to decide upon matrimony: it gave him pleasure to attach such a

woman to himself, and at the same time he realized that he was performing an action which would meet with the approval of society.

So Ivan Iliitch married.

During the period of the bridal festivities and the early days of wedded life which followed, thanks to his wife's loving caresses, the new furniture, plate, and linen with which he was surrounded, all went on smoothly, and, indeed, everything remained satisfactory until Mrs. Iliitch became *enceinte*. Her husband was just beginning to think that marriage, far from disturbing his easy, pleasant, joyous, but always decorous way of living sanctioned by the society he frequented, would only serve to adorn it, but in the altered circumstances which supervened he discovered that there was a fresh element in his existence, something unexpected, disagreeable and painful, and, what was still worse, inconvenient; something it had been impossible for him to foresee and impossible to avoid.

His wife, without any reason so far as he could see, began to disturb the ease and comfort of his life; she became jealous without any ground, required him to pay her constant attentions, showed herself ready to take offence at the merest trifles, and made actual scenes with him.

Ivan Iliitch attempted at first to escape from all these annoyances by reverting to the amusements of his bachelor life; he tried to pay no attention to his wife's bad humour, and endeavoured to continue his pleasant butterfly existence, asking his friends to his house, arranging card-parties, or going to his club and visiting his acquaintances. However, at last he took alarm, for his wife assailed him with so much virulent abuse, and persisted in it whenever he refused to yield to her demands, being evidently determined to increase the latter until he made up his mind to give in to her by staying at home and remaining as dull as herself.

This taught him that marriage does not always add to the charms and comforts of life, but, on the

contrary, entails many inconveniences, from which it is expedient for a man to free himself. Accordingly he set to work to find some means of deliverance ; his official duties were the only matters of which Praskovia Feodorovna stood in awe ; so that he could rely on his position, and all it entailed, to back him against his wife, and enable him to form a circle of his own.

After the birth of a child, various fruitless attempts to suckle it and other failures ; after different real and imaginary ailments of both mother and child, in which Ivan Iliitch was forced to interfere, little as he knew of such matters, he realized more strongly than ever the imperious necessity of creating a life of his own outside the family circle. Thus, as his wife became more irritable and exacting, he concentrated his interest more and more on his work. He began to feel more and more attached to his professional occupations, and ambition became his mainspring. He clearly saw that family life, while offering some advantages, was in reality a horribly complex and troublesome business, and that in order that he might discharge its duties—by which he meant living so as to secure the approval of society—it must be regulated like his official work.

Accordingly he regulated his intercourse with his wife. She was to play the part as mistress of the household, to secure to her husband all needful bedroom comforts, as well as the convenience of breakfasting and dining at home, and, above all, to respect the outward formalities required by public opinion. As to the rest, if any pleasant domestic moments came, he hailed them with gratitude ; while if he were assailed by any shock or recrimination, he took speedy refuge in his public life, where peace reigned.

Ivan Iliitch was appreciated for his excellent magisterial qualities, and within three years he was appointed deputy-prosecutor. His new powers, their importance, his authority to summon before him and send to prison whomsoever he pleased, the

publicity given to his speeches, and the success of his measures—all served to attach him still more to his public career.

Children came to him in rapid succession; his wife grew more and more shrewish and irritable; however, the footing upon which he had established matters rendered him almost invulnerable.

At the end of seven years' residence in the same city, he was dispatched to another province as procurator. He removed. His income was not large, and the post was not to his wife's taste. The salary, indeed, was higher, but they found living dearer in the locality where they now resided. Added to this, they lost two children in their new home, so that it grew more distasteful than ever.

Prascovia Feodorovna considered her husband responsible for all the misfortunes that had befallen them in this place. Almost every conversation between husband and wife, especially those relating to the children's education, degenerated into disputes.

Occasionally, indeed, they relapsed into affectionate intercourse, but that never lasted long. There might be some peaceful isles where their tossed bark anchored for awhile; but it was soon carried out into an ocean of covert hatred, made manifest by their mutual estrangement.

Ivan Iliitch might have been annoyed by this estrangement if he had not regarded it as inevitable. He had even come to consider the situation not merely as natural, but as calculated to exercise his activity within his domestic circle. He kept trying to free himself from these worries, and to make them less annoying; and this he managed by bestowing less and less time upon his family. When he could not avoid his wife's company, he contrived to make it endurable by the presence of others.

His main interest, however, was in his official work. This was the pivot of his existence, and absorbed the ardour of his mind.

He felt the charm of being able to ruin any one he chose, and was conscious of his own importance

(manifest even whenever he met his subordinates on entering the court), as well as the happy way he had of dealing both with superiors and inferiors. All this, added to his conversations with his colleagues dining out, and games at whist, occupied his life so fully that it passed away comfortably and pleasantly, as he had expected it to do.

Another seven years thus elapsed. The eldest daughter was nearly sixteen ; they had lost another child, and the only son remaining to them was a collegian, an interminable subject of debate. Ivan Iliitch would have liked to enter the young fellow at the Law Schools ; but Prascovia Feodorovna, on purpose to thwart her husband, had sent the lad to college. As for their daughter, she was educated at home and paid great attention to her lessons ; the collegian also showed great industry.

III

THUS passed seventeen years of Ivan Iliitch's married life ; and he had become a procurator of long standing, having several times declined to change his post in order to await some more important promotion, when a vexatious incident occurred to disturb his peace. He had expected to be nominated as presiding judge in a university town, but a colleague named Hoppé forestalled him in some inexplicable fashion and obtained the appointment. Ivan Iliitch felt irritated, and heaped reproaches on his favoured rival, besides quarrelling with his superiors and offending them ; the result was that when the next set of changes came, he found himself passed over.

This happened in 1880, the worst year in his life. On the one hand, his earnings were now insufficient to meet the family expenses ; and on the other, what he regarded as a cruel injustice seemed to others quite a simple matter. Even his father did not feel obliged to come to the rescue.

He felt himself deserted by his friends, to whom his situation, with a salary of three thousand five hundred roubles, appeared natural and even brilliant.

He was the only person who realized that, what with the feeling of the various wrongs inflicted upon him, with his wife's constant harping, and the debts he was beginning to incur by living in a style beyond his means, his situation was anything but natural.

During that summer he took a holiday by way of retrenching, and went to live with his wife at her brother's house in the country. While condemned to an idle life there, he became profoundly disgusted with everything; he found that it would be impossible to go on living in the former style, and that some decisive step must be taken.

After a sleepless night, spent in pacing the terrace, he determined to proceed to St. Petersburg in order to agitate, and avenge himself on those who had been unable to appreciate him, by getting himself transferred to another department.

On the very next day, regardless of the objections of his wife and brother-in-law, he started for the capital.

He had only one request to make, a request for a post worth five thousand roubles, no matter in what department or ministry, and no matter however great might be the violence done to his opinions. All that he wanted was an appointment worth five thousand roubles a year, either in some Government department, in a bank, on a railway company, in the Empress Marie's institutions,[1] or even in the custom-house service. It was all the same to him, provided the situation were only worth the amount he had decided upon. Moreover, under any circumstance he intended to leave a department which had treated him so unjustly. However, this journey of Ivan Iliitch's met with startling success.

At Kursk a friend of his, named Iline, entered the first-class compartment which he occupied, and told him of a telegram that had just been received by the Governor of Kursk, announcing a change of minister.

[1] Educational establishments for young girls.

Ivan Simionovitch was about to succeed Stepan Grigorievitch. This change, besides its general importance to Russia, had a special significance for Ivan Iliitch, since it brought into office a fresh personage, Piotr Petrovitch, and also one of the latter's friends, Zakhar Ivanovitch, a circumstance very favourable to the interests of Ivan Iliitch, who was intimate with the last-named individual.

At Moscow he heard the news confirmed, and as soon as he reached St. Petersburg he went in search of Zakhar Ivanovitch, who promised to find something to suit him in the same ministry.

A week afterwards he telegraphed to his wife: 'Zakhar to Muller's place; on first movement, nomination certain.'

Ivan Iliitch, thanks to these changes, obtained such promotion that all at once he found himself two steps ahead of his former colleagues: his appointment had a salary of five thousand roubles attached to it, and three thousand five hundred were allowed him for expenses.

He then forgot his grudges against his old enemies and the ministry, and considered himself perfectly happy. He returned into the country happier than he had been for a long time. Even Prascovia Feodorovna shared his delight, and peace was re-established between them.

Ivan Iliitch gave her an account of the honourable treatment he had experienced in St. Petersburg, and of the confusion of his enemies, who now sought his good graces; he described how jealous they were, and how much those in authority had made of him. Prascovia Feodorovna listened as though she believed him, never once contradicting him, but contenting herself with forming plans for settling in the city to which they would have to remove.

Ivan Iliitch was delighted to find that his wife's ideas were in unison with his own, and that his life, after deviating for a moment from the right track, was about to resume its usual course of ease and pleasure.

He had only returned for a brief period, for on the 10th of September he was to enter upon his post. He needed some time to move from his province, to make needful purchases and issue needful orders; in a word, to set up such an establishment as he and his wife had planned together. Now that everything was so happily settled, and such a good understanding established between the pair, especially now that they met so rarely, they affected a cordiality in their relations such as they had never been acquainted with since their marriage. Ivan Iliitch had at first thought of taking all his family away with him at once. His brother and sister-in-law, however, who had suddenly become quite affectionate relatives, prevailed on him to start alone.

He departed, and the good humour, engendered as much by his success as by the union restored between himself and his wife, never once forsook him. He lighted upon a wonderful suite of apartments, just what they had both dreamt of, with large and lofty entertaining rooms in the good old style, a handsome and convenient library, a boudoir for his wife and daughter, a tiny study for his son; in fact, just what they wanted in every point.

Ivan Iliitch arranged every detail himself, chose the hangings and bought the furniture, which included certain second-hand pieces upon which he set particular store. The whole gradually began to assume shape, and his ideal picture was becoming realized. Indeed, when his task was but half complete, the result surpassed his expectations. He pictured the elegant and distinguished appearance which his residence would present when finished, as something quite out of the common. When he retired for the night, his thoughts still lingered with his drawing-room, and as he glanced round the bare walls he could fancy the fireplace adornments already there, with the screen, and the little what-not he had bought; the little chairs placed here and there, the china plaques duly hung, and the bronze figures properly arranged. He enjoyed the prospect of the

surprise which he was preparing for Paschka and Lisanka,[1] who were persons of taste like himself. They would certainly never expect all this, especially his good luck in getting at a bargain certain old pieces of furniture which would give the house quite an air of distinction. In his letters he spoke almost disparagingly of everything, in order to enhance the surprise.

He became so much absorbed in these cares that he took less interest than he had anticipated in his official duties, although he liked them. During the sittings his thoughts often wandered away, and he pondered over what sort of poles he should have for his curtains, and so on. The arrangements preoccupied him so much that he often set to work with his own hands, altering the disposition of the furniture and hanging up the curtains.

One day, when he had mounted upon a stool to explain to an upholsterer how he wished to have some drapery arranged, his foot slipped, and he fell. However, being strong and agile, he recovered his balance, and merely hurt his side against the window-fastening. He felt it for a time, but the pain soon left him. Neither his health nor his spirits were impaired: in fact, he wrote to his family, 'I feel myself fifteen years younger.'

He expected to have had everything ready in September, but the business lagged on until the middle of October. To atone for this, the decorations proved perfect, not merely in his own eyes, but in those of all his visitors. In point of fact, the place was furnished in the style adopted by people of moderate income, who try to ape the wealthy and merely succeed in their attempt at imitation: hangings, ebony, flowers, carpets, bronzes, were to be seen; here there was a dark tone, and there a touch of brilliancy; in fact, there was everything that people of one class affect so as to resemble those of another. The resemblance in this case was really so perfect that nothing deserved special notice, although Ivan Iliitch took credit to himself for originality.

[1] Diminutives of Prascovia and Elizabeth.

He met his family at the station, and brought them to the newly-decorated suite of rooms, which had been properly lighted up; a footman, with a white tie, threw open the door of the hall, which was set out with flowers, and when the mother and daughter passed on to the drawing-room and library, uttering admiring ejaculations at every step, Ivan Iliitch's heart swelled with pride and his face beamed.

That very evening when Prascovia Feodorovna asked him, in the course of conversation over the tea-table, how it happened that he had fallen, he began to laugh, and then mimicked himself and his fall, and the upholsterer's alarm.

'I am not a gymnast for nothing; another man might have been killed on the spot,' he said, 'but I only just grazed my side a little, here—if I touch it, it still hurts, but it is getting right now; it is merely a bruise.'

IV

So the family took up their abode in the new house, where they found themselves just short of one room—after a time, we always find ourselves short of a room—living upon the new income, which was just short of a few roubles; five hundred more, and it would have been perfection.

At first all went on smoothly. Things were not quite complete; something wanted finishing, another required to be ordered, a third article had to be moved or rearranged. However, in spite of some slight differences of opinion between husband and wife, they were so delighted, and found so much to occupy them, that everything was settled without any great dissension.

But when there was nothing more left to arrange, they began to feel bored. They became conscious of the fact that something was wanting to their happiness. Still, they formed fresh acquaintances, and resumed their habits, and their life seemed fully

occupied. Ivan Iliitch spent his mornings in court, and came home to dinner. At first he was in the best of humours, though occasionally he felt annoyed, mainly about the furniture; a mark on the carpet or the hangings, or a broken curtain cord, would irritate him; indeed, he had taken so much trouble about everything that he resented the slightest damage. On the whole, however, his life flowed on as he expected it to do, lightly, smoothly, and pleasantly.

At nine o'clock he rose, took his coffee, read the newspaper, donned his uniform, and went to the court. There his neck, accustomed to the yoke, bowed under it without any effort. The applicants who came to him, the information he had to give, his office work, the public sittings, and the administrative conferences he had to attend, were so many claims which compelled him to put aside all domestic cares, such as might have interfered with the regular course of business; in fact, he was bound to have none but official relations with the public.

A man might come, for instance, to apply for some information. In his private character Ivan Iliitch had no reason for obliging him, but if the man's relations to the magistrate proved of a kind to be noted down on official paper, Ivan Iliitch would exert himself to the utmost in his favour, always retaining the polite and affable manners distinguishing an amiable man.

Ivan Iliitch excelled in establishing a line of demarcation between his professional duties and private life. Occasionally, however, he seemed to amuse himself by confounding them, which his long practice and cultivated talents allowed him to do. While keeping well within the bounds of decorum, he displayed not merely readiness but dexterity in this game.

In the intervals of business he smoked, drank tea, discussed politics, general topics, and card-playing; however, his favourite subject was promotion. Then, a little fatigued, but as proud as a first violin

who has just played his part in an orchestra in excellent style, he returned home.

His wife and daughter, meanwhile, were receiving or paying visits, the son was at college, or preparing his tasks at home with his tutors; he had a very retentive memory for all that he was taught.

Everything went on smoothly. After dinner, if there were no visitors, Ivan Iliitch sometimes read the book of the day, and in the evening he devoted himself to his work, dissecting reports, examining the Code, comparing depositions, and finding the suitable purview for each case. This neither amused nor bored him. He would rather have been playing whist, to be sure, but in default thereof, he far preferred this work to remaining in idle solitude or bestowing his company upon his wife.

What gave him most delight were the little dinners to which he invited persons of both sexes who made a figure in society; this pastime reminded him of the entertainments given by distinguished people, just as his drawing-room reminded him of their reception halls. Once he even had a regular reception. There was dancing, Ivan Iliitch enjoyed it thoroughly, and the party would have been perfect had it not been for an altercation with his wife relating to the cakes and sweetmeats. Contrary to Prascovia Feodorovna's advice he had ordered everything from an expensive pastry-cook's, and in great profusion, so that the bill amounted to forty-five roubles. The dispute ran high; his wife treating him as a crazy fool, and he, in his anger, pronouncing the word 'divorce.'

The party itself, however, passed off capitally. It was attended by the best society, and Ivan Iliitch danced with Princess Trufonova, a sister of the famous founder of the '*Emporte mon chagrin*' society.

His self-esteem was gratified by the discharge of his official duties; his vanity by mixing in good society; but his real pleasure lay in cards. He confessed that after the saddest events he felt supreme delight—delight that made his face beam—in sitting

down with some good players and a skilful partner to four-handed whist (with five players the game is less amusing, though politeness makes people say they like it). He delighted to play a serious and intelligent game (especially when in luck), to sup afterwards, take a glass of good wine, and then go to bed satisfied, particularly if he had won a trifle (to win too much is unpleasant).

Such was the life led by Ivan Iliitch and his family. Their society was select; persons of good position and young people came to the house. The father, mother, and daughter held just the same views as to their social relations; and all three, without exchanging a word, concurred in dropping certain friends and relatives, insignificant people who, full of ardour and overflowing with affection, came to see them in their drawing-room adorned with Japanese china. Thus the obscure friends soon ceased to come with such ardour, and the Golovines saw none but the best society.

Meanwhile the young men fluttered round Lisanka, and one of them, Petrichtcheff, an examining magistrate, the son of Dimitri Ivanovitch Petrichtcheff, and sole heir to his property, began to pay her such marked attentions that Ivan Iliitch was already consulting his wife as to whether it would not be advisable for them all to drive out together in a *troïka*, or to get up some amateur theatricals.

V

ALL the family were in good health. The term indisposition could scarcely be applied to what Ivan Iliitch occasionally complained of, viz., a queer taste in his mouth, and an uncomfortable sensation on the left side of the stomach.

This uncomfortable sensation, however, increased without degenerating exactly into illness, and Ivan Iliitch finally experienced a constant feeling of

heaviness in the side, and acquired an irritable temper, which grew worse day by day, soon spoiling the comfort of the domestic circle. The constant bickerings that ensued banished all pleasure, and there was even a difficulty in keeping up appearances.

Scenes grew more and more frequent. The little isles, where the couple could light for a moment without disputing, grew further and further apart. Prascovia Feodorovna used to say, and not without due grounds, that her husband now had an awful temper. However, she was given to exaggeration, and she would go on to say that he had always been the same, and that she must be an angel to have borne it for twenty years. It was true that now Ivan Iliitch was always the one to begin the quarrel.

He began to grumble regularly when they sat down to table. At the beginning, over the soup, he would sometimes complain that the plates were cracked, or that the dinner was not to his mind, or else that his son put his elbows on the table; while at other times he did not like the style in which his daughter's hair was dressed; and all the blame was invariably laid on Prascovia.

At first his wife would justify herself, and give him a sharp answer in return. But when, on two occasions, she saw him thus fly into a rage at the commencement of the meal, she decided that it must be a crisis produced by taking food, and she gave in. Instead of saying a word, she simply hurried over the dinner.

She regarded this submission on her part as very meritorious. She made up her mind that her husband was rendering her very miserable by his dreadful temper, and began to bemoan her fate. The more she pitied herself, the more she detested her husband. She might have longed for his death, but could not; for if he were to die, there would be an end to his salary, and this thought made her hate him all the more. She considered herself the most unfortunate of women, since even death would bring her no deliverance; and her irritation became all

the more intense as she considered herself called upon to conceal it.

At last, after a scene in which Ivan Iliitch had shown himself peculiarly unjust, as he himself owned, attributing his excessive irritability to his ailments, Prascovia Feodorovna advised him to attend to his health, and sent him off to consult a celebrated doctor.

He went. It was just as he had expected, he had to wait, and then he saw the doctor, who displayed the stiff professional manners which he knew so well in himself as a magistrate. There were the little thumps, the questions which called forth stereotyped replies scarcely heard, the examination with the stethoscope and the air of importance conveying the idea that the patient had nothing to do with the matter. 'We are going to make it all clear,' the doctor implied; 'we know everything beforehand, and how to set to work; always in the same fashion, no matter what may be your temperament.' Ivan Iliitch could have fancied himself in court. The airs he assumed towards the prisoners in the dock were similar to those which the doctor assumed towards his patients.

What the doctor said was this: 'This and that in you denote that and this; but should our suppositions not be confirmed, then, after such and such investigations, we must conclude this and that, and if we conclude this and that, then,' etc. etc.

The only interest Ivan Iliitch felt was in one point —was his condition serious or not? But the doctor paid no heed to such an ill-timed inquiry. From a professional point of view it was an idle question, and unworthy of discussion. As for an exact diagnosis, the complaint, so the doctor said, was a displaced spleen, or chronic catarrh, or an affection of the pylorus. But as to whether Ivan Iliitch's life were in danger, not a word.

There was a struggle for supremacy between the displaced spleen and the pylorus; and in the discussion carried on in Ivan Iliitch's presence, the doctor pronounced a brilliant judgment in favour of the

pylorus ; with a caution, however, that an analysis of his patient's urine might point to a different complaint, in which case he must begin his examination afresh.

This was precisely Ivan Iliitch's usual mode of proceeding with hundreds of persons under suspicion, a mode of proceeding which he carried out with admirable perfection. The doctor gave his diagnosis of the case just as admirably, even casting a triumphant glance over his spectacles at the suspicious case before him.

The conclusion drawn by Ivan Iliitch from this diagnosis was that everything about him was out of order, and that neither the doctor, nor possibly any one else, cared a jot about the matter. This conclusion sent a sickly shock through his mind, inspiring him with deep commiseration for himself, and with wrath against the doctor who was so indifferent to such an important question.

He did not show this, however. He rose up, laid the fee on the table, and then said with a sigh :

' We invalids are no doubt often too inquisitive ; however, is my complaint of a serious nature or not ? '

The doctor gave him a severe glance over his spectacles, as much as to say : ' Prisoner, if you deviate from the question, I shall be forced to have you conducted to prison.'

Then he observed aloud : ' I have already told you all that I consider it needful or advisable for you to know. Another examination will complete the diagnosis.'

And thereupon the doctor bowed him out.

Ivan Iliitch slowly retired, stepped sadly into his sledge and drove home. On the way he kept pondering over the doctor's words, trying to comprehend all the scientific jargon he had heard, and to translate it into plain language, so that he might solve the question : ' Am I really ill, very ill, or is it nothing of importance ? '

It seemed to him as if the meaning of the doctor's words was that he was very ill. Everything in the

street, the *isvostchiks*, the houses, and the shops looked gloomy. His dull, continuous pain never gave him a moment's respite, and the doctor's ambiguous words began to acquire grave significance. Ivan Iliitch, agitated by a new and painful sensation, listened to his own tale of suffering.

When he reached home, he began telling everything to his wife, who listened, but in the middle of his story in came his daughter, with her hat on, ready to go out with her mother. She sat down reluctantly to submit to the delay; however, neither of them would hear him out.

'Very well, I am very glad!' said Prascovia Feodorovna. 'I now hope that you will take care of yourself and remember your medicine regularly. Give me the prescription; I will send Guerassim to the druggist's.'

And then off she went to put on her bonnet.

Ivan Iliitch had lost his breath with talking all the time his wife was in the room. When she left it, he heaved a deep sigh.

'Well,' said he, 'perhaps after all it may be nothing.'

He took the medicines prescribed for him, likewise following the treatment, which had been revised after an examination of his urine. But some confusion was caused by the result of the analysis and the modifications which it introduced into the treatment. Matters were not referred to the doctor, whose instructions, moreover, were but ill understood. Perhaps, too, either from forgetfulness or negligence, he had not pointed out clearly what ought to be done, or possibly he had concealed something.

However this may have been, Ivan Iliitch followed the treatment scrupulously, and this in itself served to console him.

His chief care, since his visit to the doctor, had been to observe to the letter every prescription bearing upon his general health as well as his particular complaint, and to study his ailments and bodily functions. He was more interested in study-

ing the state of the human frame in health and disease than in any other subject. Whenever any mention was made in his presence of sickness, death, or recovery, and especially when any one alluded to an illness akin to his own, he listened eagerly, and with an attempt to disguise his emotion he asked questions, and made comparisons with his own complaint.

His sufferings did not abate ; still, he forced himself to believe that he was improving. When nothing irritated him, he was able to delude himself ; but a dispute with his wife, any contradiction in court, or an unsuccessful rubber, instantly showed him the aggravated nature of his complaint. Formerly he had been able to bear such little annoyances in hopes that matters would take a better turn, that obstacles would be surmounted, and that success was near at hand ; whereas now the least drawback depressed his spirits and made him give way to despair.

He would say to himself : ' I was just beginning to get better, and the treatment was taking effect, when this wretched piece of ill luck befell me, or this unpleasant occurrence happened.' And then he felt enraged with the people or things which were thus persecuting him to death.

He felt that his anger did him harm, and yet he could not restrain it. One would have fancied that, realizing that his anger with persons and events only increased his sufferings, he would not have dwelt upon such slight annoyances. But he acted quite in a contrary fashion ; after telling himself that he needed repose, and thinking of avoiding whatever might interfere with it, he became excited by the smallest worry.

He made his condition still worse by reading medical books and reports. The aggravation of his complaint proceeded in such a slow and regular manner that it was possible for him to deceive himself by comparing one day with its predecessor, so slight was the difference between the two. But when he consulted the doctors, he felt himself growing worse

and worse, and at an alarming rate too. However, he went on consulting them.

That very month he had gone to another medical celebrity, who had expressed himself much to the same effect as the first one, although he had worded his questions differently. This fresh consultation only increased Ivan Iliitch's anxiety and alarm. A friend's friend—an able medical man—then gave a different opinion as to the nature of his complaint, and though he promised to cure it, his questions and hypotheses only served to bewilder Ivan Iliitch the more.

A homœopathic doctor gave a different name to his malady, and ordered globules, which, unknown to all, Ivan swallowed religiously for a whole week. But when, at the end of it, he found himself no better, besides having lost all confidence in the virtue of his previous treatment, his dejection became very great.

One day a lady of his acquaintance told him of a case that had been cured by the agency of *eikons*. Ivan Iliitch caught himself listening attentively, and pondering as to the reality of the cure. This discovery terrified him.

'Can my mental faculties have become so much weaker?' he asked himself. 'There is nothing in it, surely. It 's all nonsense. I must not take such a gloomy view of things. I will keep to one doctor, and follow one treatment absolutely. I will not trouble my mind again, but will persevere with the same regimen till the summer comes. Then we shall see. I will have done with hesitation!'

This was easier to say than to do. The pain in his side kept growing more acute, and hardly ever left him; the queer taste on his palate became stronger, he perceived a fetid smell in his mouth, and his appetite and strength were both waning. There was no blinding himself to the fact that something terrible, unusual, and of vital consequence was taking place within him; and he was the only person aware of it; those about him did not or would not understand,

but went on thinking that nothing in the world had changed.

This was what tortured him the most.

He could see that his family, especially his wife and daughter, both in a whirl of gaiety, failed to understand the situation, and felt impatient at his gloomy airs and exactions just as if he had been at fault. In spite of their attempts at dissimulation, he could also perceive that they considered him a nuisance. As for Prascovia Feodorovna, she had made up her mind on the subject of her husband's illness, and she stuck to her opinion, no matter what he said or did.

'You must know,' she would say to her friends, 'that Ivan Iliitch will not follow the doctor's advice, as any reasonable man would. One day he takes his medicine, eats what he has been ordered to eat, and goes to bed early; but on the morrow, unless I look after him, he forgets his physic, partakes of sturgeon (which he ought not to touch), and sits up till one o'clock in the morning, playing at whist.'

'What! When?' Ivan Iliitch would ask peevishly, on hearing this. 'Once only, at Piotr Ivanovitch's.'

'And yesterday, with Schebek!'

'Because my pain would not allow me to sleep.'

'What difference did that make? If you act like that, you will never get well, but simply go on plaguing us.'

According to Prascovia Feodorovna's complaints to her visitors, and to Ivan Iliitch himself, this illness was simply a device of his, another trick which he was playing on her. He felt that such was her real conviction; however, this did not make him any the better.

In court he noticed, or thought he noticed, a similar manner of treating him: he fancied that his colleagues and subordinates looked on him as a man whose place would soon be vacant: his friends rallied him on his depressed spirits, as though this terrible incomprehensible something that was gnawing at his

vitals and urging him irresistibly down some abyss, were a matter for pleasantry. Schwartz, with his gay exuberant spirits and air of propriety, especially reminded him of what he himself had been ten years earlier, and made him feel half mad.

One evening some friends came in for a game. They sat down, and the cards were dealt; the diamonds came together: there were seven of them. His partner announced 'without trumps,' and reserved two diamonds. What more was needed to put any one in good spirits. They could make every trick! Yet all at once Ivan Iliitch felt his pain and the bad taste in his mouth return; it then seemed to him most ridiculous to care about his luck.

He looked at his partner, Mikhaïl Mikhaïlovitch, and saw him dash his red hand down upon the table, and while refraining with an amiable and condescending air from taking up the cards, push them across to him—Iliitch—so that he might have the pleasure of counting the tricks.

'What is he thinking of? That I am too feeble to stretch out my hand?' thought Ivan Iliitch.

He covered the trumps and kept one too many; in fact, they missed the game by three tricks. The worst of it was, he saw Mikhaïl Mikhaïlovitch suffering, while he himself felt quite indifferent. Was not this very indifference an alarming symptom?

Every one saw how this idea distressed him.

'We can stop, if you feel tired,' they said. 'Rest a bit!'

Rest? No, he was not in the least tired, and would finish the rubber!

Every one remained silent and depressed. Ivan Iliitch felt that he was the cause of this gloomy constraint, but he was unable to remove it.

After supper the others took their departure, and Ivan Iliitch was left alone, conscious not only that his life was poisoned and was poisoning that of others, but that the poison was not dying out, but penetrating deeper and deeper into his system.

Yet, despite this consciousness, despite his physical

sufferings and apprehensions, he was obliged to go to bed, often only to be kept awake by his pain during the greater part of the night. And when morning came, he had to rise again, dress, go to the court, speak and write, or if he stayed at home he had to count, one by one, the four-and-twenty hours, each of which was so much protracted torture. Thus he lived, on the verge of an abyss, completely isolated, without any one to understand or compassionate him.

VI

ONE month, two months passed by in this position. On New Year's Eve, Ivan Iliitch's brother-in-law came to see them. Prascovia Feodorovna had gone out shopping.

Ivan Iliitch was in court at the time. On returning to his study, he found his brother-in-law, a strong, florid-looking man, unpacking his own trunk there.

When the latter heard Ivan Iliitch's step, he raised his head and gazed at him silently for a second. His glance revealed everything to the ailing man. The brother-in-law's lips parted as if to utter an exclamation, but he refrained from giving vent to it. This movement confirmed everything.

'Well, you find me a good deal changed, don't you?' asked Iliitch.

'Yes—there is a change.'

And the brother-in-law evaded all Ivan Iliitch's attempts to keep the conversation to the subject of his looks.

When Prascovia Feodorovna returned, her brother went to her room to see her. Ivan Iliitch then locked himself in his study and examined himself for a long time in the glass, gazing first at his full face and then at his profile. He took down his portrait and compared it with the image reflected in the mirror. There was a great difference between the two. Next, he rolled up his sleeve to the elbow,

examined his arm, turned down his sleeve again, and seated himself on the couch ; then he turned as black as night.

' It must not be, it must not ! ' he said to himself. Then suddenly starting to his feet, he went to the table, took up a legal paper and tried to peruse it, but could not succeed.

He opened his study door and went to the sitting-room. The door of the further drawing-room was closed. He advanced on tiptoe, straining his ears.

' No, you are exaggerating ! ' he heard Prascovia Feodorovna saying.

' Exaggerating ! Cannot you see that he is a walking corpse ! Look at his glassy eyes. Why, what is the matter with him ? '

' Who can say ? Nikolaieff (another doctor) said something, I forget what. Lechtchetitski (the celebrated man) said just the opposite——'

Ivan Iliitch turned away, went to his own room, lay down, and tried to reflect.

' The spleen—the displaced spleen.'

He recollected all that the doctors had told him as to how it had become displaced and kept moving about ; then by an effort of the imagination he tried to seize hold of it, stop it, and fix it in its place. It seemed such a simple thing to do.

' Well, I will go to Piotr Ivanovitch again,' he said, referring to the friend who knew the doctor.

He rang the bell, ordered the horse to be put in, and prepared to start.

' Where are you off to, Ivan ? ' asked his wife in an unusually subdued tone, and with a gentleness to which he was not accustomed.

This peculiar gentleness irritated him. He looked at her gloomily.

' I have to go and see Piotr Ivanovitch,' he replied.

He called on the friend who was intimate with the doctor, and asked him to accompany him to the latter's house. They found the doctor at home, and had a long conversation with him.

On reviewing what the doctor had told him, by the

light of anatomy combined with physiology, Ivan Iliitch understood the whole business.

There was something infinitesimal the matter with the pylorus. This might be eliminated: one had only to reinforce the energy of one organ to diminish the activity of another, and then assimilation would be the result, and equilibrium would be restored.

He came home late for dinner. He ate, and chatted in a lively strain, but could not make up his mind to shut himself up to work. At length, however, he made the resolution, returned to his study, and set himself at once to his task. He turned over his papers; but still the feeling of important private business waiting in the background to be dispatched never abandoned him.

When he had finished, he remembered that this private matter was the pylorus. Still, he would not let it affect his spirits, but went into the drawing-room for tea. There were some visitors, they conversed, and there was singing and playing; the examining magistrate, whom he considered such a desirable match for his daughter, was there.

Ivan Iliitch spent the evening in brighter spirits than usual, so far as his wife could see; but he never forgot for an instant that the all-important subject of the pylorus was awaiting him.

At eleven o'clock he bade good evening to his visitors, and returned to his room. Since his illness he had slept alone in a small chamber adjoining his study. He lay down and opened one of Zola's novels, but his thoughts were too much occupied to allow him to read. In his imagination he anticipated the ardently desired cure of the pylorus—to assimilate, secrete, and restore regular activity.

'Yes, that is all, that is all,' said he to himself; 'all we have to do is to give nature a helping hand.'

He suddenly remembered that he had a dose to take, so he rose up, swallowed it, then stretched himself again upon his back, studying the salutary action of the remedy, and the relief it gradually brought him.

'All I have to do is to physic myself regularly, and avoid all injurious influences. I feel myself a little better already—a good deal better.'

He touched his side and felt no pain.

'No, I do not feel it now; I am much better,' he said to himself. Then he blew out the candle and lay on his side, thinking the pylorus must be recovering and assimilating. Suddenly, however, the well-known pain returned, sharp, dull, shooting, obstinate, silent and grave; there was also the same strange taste in his mouth. Then his heart misgave him, and his head reeled.

'What, again,' he groaned, 'again! Will this never end?'

Suddenly the current of his thoughts changed. 'The pylorus, the spleen,' he said to himself. 'Why! The matter isn't one of the pylorus or spleen, but of life and—death. Yes, life was here, and now it is departing; it is departing and I cannot detain it. Why should I delude myself? Does not every one except myself plainly realize that I am dying; it is a mere question of weeks or days—perhaps it is even close at hand now. There was light, and now darkness has come. I was here, and now I am going—whither?'

He felt himself grow chill, his breath almost stopped. All that he could hear was the palpitation of his heart.

'I shall cease to live on earth,' he mused, 'but what will continue to exist? Nothing will remain. Where shall I be when my earthly existence has ceased? Can this be death? No, it shall not be!'

He started up, tried to light the candle, groped about with his trembling hands, and finally let the candlestick fall. Then he threw himself back upon his pillows.

'Why not? What does it matter?' he asked himself as he stared into the darkness. 'Death, yes, it is *death*, and they do not understand; they will not understand it, they do not pity me. They go on playing,' he added, as the sound of voices and

musical refrains reached him through the door. 'What do they care? However, they will have to die, too, the fools! I may go first, but they must follow. Their time will come. And yet the idiots can laugh!'

He was choking with rage, and suffering agonies. Can it be possible that we are all subject to such gloomy terrors?

Again he raised himself up. 'No, I have not fathomed it yet,' he reflected, 'I must take courage and think it all out again.'

Accordingly he began to think.

'Yes, the beginning of my illness was that blow on my side. I did not feel any change; merely a little dull pain. Then it grew worse; next came the doctor, my depressed spirits, irritation, and the doctor again; whilst I kept constantly drawing nearer and nearer to the verge of the abyss. My strength kept declining—I grew weaker and weaker, and now I am worn out; my eyes are glazed, death is upon me, while all I can think of is the pylorus! my only idea is to cure my intestines! can this actually be death?'

His terror then returned to him. Still panting, he stooped down, and hunted for the matches. He pressed his elbow against the table by his bedside. It hurt him, and was in his way. He turned his anger upon the piece of furniture, hurled it impatiently on one side, and finally knocked it over. Maddened, and panting for breath, he next threw himself on his back, expecting the end to come presently.

At this moment the visitors were taking their leave, and as Prascovia Feodorovna saw them to the door, she heard the noise of the fall, and went into her husband's room.

'What is the matter?' she asked.

'Nothing; I knocked something down unintentionally.'

She went out, and returned with a light. Ivan Iliitch was lying down, panting like a man who has just run a verst. He looked at her with fixed eyes.

'What is it, Ivan?' she asked.

'Nothing; I—knocked—down——'

But what was the use of speaking? She would not understand.

She did not, certainly. However, she picked up the table, lighted her husband's candle, and left the room. She had to take leave of other friends.

When she came back he was still in the same position, on his back, with his eyes fixed on the ceiling.

'What is it? Do you feel worse?' she asked.

'Yes.'

She shook her head, and sat down again for a moment.

'Tell me, Ivan, had we not better send for Lechtchetitski?' she inquired. This meant calling in the celebrated doctor, regardless of expense.

He smiled bitterly, and answered, 'No.'

She waited for another minute, and then went up to him and kissed his brow. He hated her from the bottom of his heart as she kissed him, and had to exercise great self-control to avoid repulsing her.

'Good-bye for the present. You will get a little sleep, won't you?' she said as she went off.

'Yes,' answered her husband gloomily.

VII

IVAN ILIITCH saw himself dying. He was overwhelmed with perplexity, plunged into lasting despair. He knew in his inmost soul that he was dying, still he could not habituate himself to the idea: he neither did nor could entertain it.

The following syllogism, which he had learnt in Kiziveter's Logic: 'Kay is a man; all men are mortal; so Kay is mortal,' he had always regarded as just referring to Kay, but not in the least applicable to himself. It regarded Kay, as being a man in the abstract, and this was perfectly natural;

but he was neither Kay nor a man in the abstract, he was a being with a distinct personality. He had been little Vania,[1] with a papa and mamma, with Mitia and Volodia,[2] his brothers, with playthings, a coachman and a nurse, and afterwards with Katinka, with all the joys, sorrows, and enthusiasm of childhood, youth, and early manhood.

Was it Kay who had inhaled the scent of the leather ball which Vania was so fond of sniffing at? Was it Kay who had kissed his mamma's hand, who had delighted in hearing the rustle of a silk dress, or had made a clamour for cakes at the Law Schools? Had he been in love? Was it Kay who had presided so cleverly over the debates in court?

'Yes, it was true that Kay was mortal, and it was quite natural that he should die; but I, Vania, Ivan Iliitch, with all my feelings and mental powers, I am something very different, and it is quite unnatural that I should die. It would be treating me too badly.'

These were his feelings: 'If I had to die like Kay, I should accept the fact; my inner consciousness would have re-echoed it. But such is not my case. I and my friends both plainly understood that we had not Kay's fate to fear. And yet now what is going to happen?' he asked himself. 'It is impossible, quite impossible, and still it is so. But how can such a thing be, how can I comprehend it?'

He could not, so he attempted to banish the ridiculous and morbid notion, and to replace it by more sane and judicious thoughts. But the idea seemed to assume a form, constantly returning and rising up before him.

He summoned other arguments to his assistance, hoping that they might furnish him with some consolation. He endeavoured to cling to those primitive notions which used to hide from him the image of death. However, strange to say, the things which used to disguise, obliterate, or remove the consciousness of mortality had now lost their efficacy.

[1] Diminutive of Ivan. [2] Diminutives of Mikhaïl and Vladimir.

In his latter days Ivan Iliitch exhausted himself with efforts to reconstruct the series of sensations which had formerly interposed between himself and death.

Sometimes he would say:

'I will resume my official duties; they used to suffice for my happiness.'

Then he returned to the court, banished all his perplexities, conversed with his colleagues, and seated himself as he used to do, his eyes wandering with a pensive and absent gaze over the crowd, while his thin hands rested on the arms of his oak chair; then, bending forward as usual towards the assessor, he turned over his notes, spoke in a low voice, and suddenly lifting his eyes and sitting bolt upright, he pronounced the customary formulas, declaring that the proceedings were about to begin. But, all at once, his pain would overtake him. Without paying any regard to the public proceedings, Ivan Iliitch, who was on the watch, endeavoured to dismiss the idea of its presence, but there was no shaking it off. Then it rose before him and looked him in the face; he became rigid, his eyes grew dim, and again he began to ask himself:

'Is it the only reality?'

His colleagues and subordinates eyed with painful surprise the brilliant, acute magistrate, their colleague, losing the thread of his discourse and beginning to blunder.

He shook himself, tried to recover his self-control, and with much difficulty conducted the remainder of the proceedings; then he returned home, painfully aware that his judicial functions were incapable of procuring him the oblivion he sought, or of delivering him from *it*. The worst of all was that *it* was dragging him home, not that he might occupy himself, but merely that he might look *it* full in the face, idly contemplate it, and suffer tortures.

Ivan Iliitch sought for some remedy to screen him from this vision; these various screens were of service for a time, but then, all at once, without actually vanishing, they allowed *it* to shine through,

as though *it* could penetrate anywhere and never be concealed.

One day he happened to enter the drawing-room which he himself had decorated, the room in which he had slipped, for which—bitter and absurd as it was to remember it—he had sacrificed his life, for he knew that his illness dated from that fall. He entered, and discovered on the polished table a deep scratch, like a groove; he looked to see what had caused it, and found that it was owing to one of the bronze corners of an album having loosened and projected. He took the album, the precious album which he had arranged so carefully, and felt indignant at the negligence of his daughter and her friends in dinging in the corners while turning over the photographs. He arranged it all again and settled the bronze.

Then he thought of removing the table and albums to a corner, close to the flowers. He rang for the footman, but it chanced that his wife and daughter came in, and when they objected he protested and got vexed; still, what did it matter so long as *that* was kept out of his memory.

As he moved the furniture about, his wife said:

'Do leave it alone; the servants can see to it. You will be hurting yourself again.'

Then *it* suddenly peeped through the screen, and he saw it. He kept hoping it would vanish, but, in spite of himself, he kept watching his complaint; alas, it was always the same thing, the same shooting pain, he could no longer forget it, and it seemed to be looking at him behind the flowers.

'It is a fact that I have thrown away my life for the sake of arranging a curtain, just as if I had fallen on the battlefield,' he thought. 'Is it possible? How terrible and yet how absurd! No, it is impossible! Impossible, and yet it is the fact!'

Then he returned to his study, lay down, and again found himself alone with his thought. He could not argue with it, he could only look it in the face and grow chill.

VIII

IT would not be easy to say how this befell Ivan Iliitch in the third month of his illness. For it came about insensibly and gradually, without any one being aware of it. His wife, his son and daughter, his friends and servants, the doctor, and even he himself grew to feel that the interest taken in him by every one was concentrated upon a single point: how long he would be in vacating his place, in ridding those around him of his troublesome presence and delivering himself from his sufferings.

He obtained less and less sleep, whereupon he took opium and had morphia injected, but nothing gave him permanent relief. The apathy which overtook him during his half-unconscious interludes at first afforded him some respite through its novelty; but the pain soon became more acute and oppressive than before.

Special dishes were prepared for him by the doctor's orders, but he found them more and more insipid, nay, even distasteful.

Special arrangements had also to be made for his evacuations. These were a constant source of torture to him, not merely on account of their offensiveness, but because they compelled him to depend upon others for assistance. It was, however, from these inconveniences that a new source of comfort arose. It was the business of Guerassim, the house moujik, to assist him. Guerassim was a young, clean, healthy fellow, who always had a happy, beaming countenance. The mere sight of this young man in his neat Russian dress, who had such repulsive duties to discharge, made Ivan Iliitch feel ashamed.

One day when he was gazing with horror at his bare emaciated thighs, the muscles of which stood out, Guerassim stepped into the room with a light firm step in his thick boots, diffusing around him a

pleasant scent of tar and winter freshness. He wore a clean apron and a cotton shirt, with the sleeves rolled back from his robust young arms. He was evidently restraining the healthy spirits which sparkled from his eyes, lest he should give the sick man pain.

'Guerassim!' said Ivan Iliitch in a feeble voice, whereupon the moujik turned upon the invalid his honest, simple, fresh young face, on which the hair was only beginning to sprout.

'What can I do for you, sir?' he asked.

'I am thinking how disagreeable all this must be to you; excuse me, I cannot help myself.'

'Oh, sir,' responded Guerassim, with a bright face and a smile which displayed his white teeth. 'Why shouldn't you trouble me? You are ill.'

And having discharged his accustomed office, he left the room with a light step. In another five minutes he returned, as buoyant as ever.

Ivan Iliitch was still sitting in his easy chair as before.

'Guerassim,' said he, 'pray come here and help me.'

Guerassim came to his side.

'Raise me; I cannot manage it alone, and I have sent Dimitri away.'

The moujik laid hold of him with a grasp as light as his step; and without making the slightest effort, or seeming to exert any force, supported him to the sofa, upon which he seated him.

'Thank you. How easily you do it!' said Ivan Iliitch.

The moujik smiled once more, and was about to retire. Ivan Iliitch, however, felt such a comfort in having him there that he would not let him go.

'Here. Please bring that chair nearer,' said he; 'not that one, this other; put it under my feet; I feel better when my feet are raised.'

Guerassim brought the chair, placed it noiselessly, and arranged Ivan Iliitch's legs upon it.

The invalid fancied that he felt better while the man lifted his feet.

'I feel more comfortable with my feet raised,' he said. 'Put that cushion under my feet.'

Guerassim obeyed. He raised his master's legs and put the cushion under them. Ivan Iliitch again felt relieved while Guerassim held his feet. When they were lowered, however, the pain returned.

'Guerassim,' said he, 'are you busy now?'

'Not in the least.'

'What have you left to do?'

'What should there be? I have done everything; there is merely some wood to chop for to-morrow.'

'Then hold my feet a little higher, will you?'

'Oh, certainly. I can easily do that.'

The moujik raised his master's legs still higher, and the sick man fancied that in this position he no longer felt his pain.

'But what will you do about the wood?' he asked.

'Don't trouble yourself, sir. There will be time enough to attend to it.'

Ivan Iliitch then told him to sit down and hold up his feet. They talked, and, strange to say, he felt better during the time the moujik held up his legs.

After this, Ivan Iliitch would call on Guerassim from time to time. He would beg him to let his legs rest on his shoulders, and was fond of talking to him.

The moujik showed a readiness to oblige, and an amount of simple kindness, dexterity, and thoughtfulness which were greatly appreciated by Ivan Iliitch. The health, strength, and exuberant spirits of others were distasteful to the patient. Guerassim's strength and cheerfulness, however, seemed to soothe rather than annoy him.

What tortured him more than anything else was the fiction kept up by everybody that he was merely ill and not dying, that he ought to cheer up and persevere with his treatment, and that the result would be successful. He knew perfectly well that all that could ensue from any measures taken would be aggravated suffering and death. The falsehood pained him greatly. It tormented him to see the

attempts which were made to hide what every one, including himself, knew so well; it also tormented him to feel himself countenancing them. It oppressed him cruelly—standing as he did upon the brink of death—to find such an awful and solemn business as dying degraded to the level of a matter of visits, curtains, and sturgeon. And, strange to say, again and again, when the fiction was maintained in his presence, he was within an ace of crying out: 'Don't lie any more! You know well enough that I am dying, and so do I. So have done with these lies!' However, he never had the energy to carry out this idea. He saw the dreaded act of dying reduced by his family to the level of an inconvenient accident merely fraught with annoyance, just like the case of a man who introduces an unpleasant smell into a drawing-room.

He found himself surrounded by the conventionalities he had worshipped throughout his life. He saw that no one could pity him, for they would not even realize his condition. Guerassim was the only one who could understand, he was the only one who pitied; and this was why Ivan Iliitch never felt completely at his ease except with the moujik.

He felt happy while Guerassim sat all night supporting his legs instead of going to bed, and when he said: 'Don't distress yourself, Ivan Iliitch, I shall have plenty of time to sleep.' And he was happy, too, when the moujik forgot himself so far as to address him in a familiar manner, adding: 'If you were not ill—why then, to be sure! But since you are, why should you not be waited on?'

Guerassim was the only one who never attempted to disguise the truth. It was easy to see that he alone entered into the situation, and did not think it necessary to conceal it. He usually confined himself to pitying his sick master, but once, when Ivan Iliitch wanted to send him to lie down, he went so far as to say: 'We shall all have to die, so why should I not do what I can for you?' thus attempting to convey the idea that he did not mind the

labour when it was in the service of a dying man, since he himself hoped one day to be nursed in his turn.

Besides this fiction, or owing to it, what troubled Ivan Iliitch most was that no one save Guerassim pitied him, and he longed so much for pity! Now and again, after prolonged suffering, what he most ardently wished for, ashamed as he would have been to own it, was to be pitied like a sick child. He would have liked to be petted, kissed, and cried over, like an infant who wants soothing. He knew that he was a leading magistrate with a grey beard, and that the thing was impossible, and yet he could not help longing for it. Guerassim's treatment was the nearest approach to what he sought for, and therefore it comforted him.

He wanted to cry, and to have some one to cry with him and caress him; but then his colleague Schebek came; and Ivan Iliitch, instead of crying and being fondled, assumed a grave, austere, and pensive expression, and yielding to the force of habit, gave his opinion upon the bearing of some judgment issued by the Court of Appeal, and became obstinate in defending it. The lie thus acted around him, and in which even he himself took a part, did more than anything else to poison Ivan Iliitch's last days.

IX

EARLY one morning Guerassim had just left the sick man, and had been replaced by Piotr, the footman. The latter put out the lights, drew the curtains, and arranged everything noiselessly. Was it morning, or was it evening? Was it a Friday or a Sunday? It mattered little to Ivan Iliitch, it was always the same thing; the same horrible shooting pain which never left him, the feeling of life ebbing away, but not yet flown; always the same horrible, frightful consciousness of

death advancing, the one reality!—with the same fiction still kept up. So why should he keep account of the weeks, days, or hours?

'Will you be pleased to take some tea?' asked Piotr.

'He wishes everything to be systematic; he wants his master to take tea each morning!' thought Ivan Iliitch.

And all the answer he gave was 'No!'

'Shall I move you to the couch?' asked the footman.

'He wants to tidy the room and I am in the way; I am dirt and disorder itself,' thought Ivan Iliitch. All, however, that he said was: 'No, leave me.'

The footman fidgeted about for a little longer. Finally, his master stretched out his hand. Piotr then came forward.

'What can I bring you?' he asked.

'My watch!'

Piotr took the watch and handed it to Ivan Iliitch.

'Half-past eight. They are not up yet, are they?'

'No. Vassili Ivanovitch (the son) has started for college, and Prascovia Feodorovna ordered me to call her if you asked for her. Do you wish me to awake her?'

'No. It is not worth while.'

'Shall I take some tea?' he thought. 'Yes, tea, bring it.'

Piotr prepared to leave the room, whereupon Ivan Iliitch grew frightened at the thought of being left alone. How should he detain the man?—Oh, the medicine, to be sure.

'Piotr, give me my medicine.'

'Who knows? Perhaps I may feel the better for it,' he thought. Then he took a spoonful.

'No, it is useless to go on hoping. It is folly, a voluntary delusion,' he mused, as the familiar taste rose in his mouth.

'Yes, I cannot drink now. But this pain, why should I feel it? Oh, that it would only cease, if but for a moment!'

He began to moan. Piotr returned to his side.

'No, go away and get me some tea,' said his master.

Piotr left the room, and as soon as Ivan Iliitch was left alone he began to groan, not so much on account of his pain, intense as it was, but on account of his mental anguish. 'The same thing for ever! These interminable nights and days—oh, that it would end at once! What, at once? To exchange darkness for death!—No, no, anything but death!'

When Piotr re-entered with the tea on a salver, Ivan Iliitch was so completely unhinged that he gazed at him for some time before realizing who he was or what he wanted. The footman looked uneasy, and it was his discomposure that recalled Ivan Iliitch to himself.

'Oh, the tea,' he said; 'very well. Put it down there, and help me first to dress and put on a clean shirt.'

Then he began his toilet, washing his hands and face with many pauses; brushing his teeth, combing his hair, and looking at himself in the glass. He was particularly startled by the sight of his damp locks clinging round his pale face.

Whilst his shirt was being changed, he knew that his terror would be redoubled if he caught sight of his wasted frame, so he took care to turn his eyes away from it. When his toilet was completed he threw on a dressing-gown, wrapped himself in a plaid, and sat down in his easy chair to drink his tea. For the moment he felt refreshed; but no sooner had he moistened his lips than the bad taste and the old pain returned. He forced himself to finish the cup, however, and then lay down, stretching out his legs, and dismissing Piotr.

Always the same! No sooner was there a gleam of hope than an ocean of despair followed, and the pain went on and on, just like his desolation; it was always the same thing. He was languishing in his terrible isolation. He would fain have called for some one to come, but he knew that he should feel still worse if any one did.

'If they would only give me some more morphia, that I might at least forget everything!' he thought. 'I will ask the doctor to find some other remedy for me. It is impossible, perfectly impossible, to go on like this!'

One hour, two hours passed in the same manner. Then came a ring at the bell. It might be the doctor. So it was. In he came, fresh, florid, flourishing, and cheerful, with a manner that seemed to say: 'You may be as much alarmed as you like, but we will set it all right.'

The doctor was aware that this manner of his was not appropriate in this case; but he had assumed it once for all and was unable to change it—he was like a man who puts on his dress-coat the first thing in the morning in order to pay a round of calls.

He rubbed his hands cheerfully, by way of inspiring his patient with confidence.

'I am bringing the cold in with me. It is freezing hard. Let me just warm myself, first of all,' said he, with an air which was evidently intended to convey the idea that when he did but get warm, he would 'set it all right.'

'Well, and how are we getting on?' he asked.

Ivan Iliitch felt that the doctor wanted to know what was going on inside him, but the doctor himself understood that there was no telling this, so he inquired what sort of a night the invalid had passed.

Iliitch cast an inquiring glance at him, as much as to say: 'Will you never be ashamed of keeping up this deception?'

But the doctor did not choose to comprehend the query. And so Ivan Iliitch said:

'This is all so alarming. The pain never ceases, never leaves me. Could you not, at least, give me something?'

'Just the way with you sick people! You are all alike! Well, I think I have warmed myself enough now. Even the cautious Prascovia Feodorovna would be satisfied, and wouldn't fear my giving you a cold. Now, first let me wish you good morning.'

And then they shook hands.

After that the doctor laid aside his cheerful manner, and gravely examined the patient, his pulse, and the temperature of his body—the stethoscope and the little thumps again coming into play.

Ivan Iliitch was quite aware that all this was a mere farce. Still, when the doctor knelt down and leant over him, applying his ear first above and then below, as he executed various gymnastic evolutions with a solemn face, Ivan Iliitch allowed himself to be impressed, just as he had formerly done with the barristers' pleadings, conscious as he was all the time of their endeavours to delude him, and of the object of their phrases. The doctor was still kneeling on the sofa and listening to his instrument, when the rustle of Prascovia Feodorovna's silk dress was heard outside the door, accompanied by sundry reproofs addressed to Piotr for not having told her that the doctor had arrived.

In she came, kissed her husband, and at once began to explain that she had been up for some time, and that only a misunderstanding had prevented her from being with him when the doctor arrived.

Ivan Iliitch looked at her with a scrutinizing glance; in his heart he begrudged her her clear complexion, her white hands and plump neck, the gloss on her hair, and the sparkle of her vivacious eyes. He hated her with all his heart, and any contact with her made the feeling difficult to restrain.

Prascovia Feodorovna's attitude towards her husband and her opinion of his illness had not altered. Just as the doctor had adopted a mode of proceeding with his patients which he had grown powerless to modify, so had she framed her own view of the case. She felt that if Ivan Iliitch were ill, it was because he was not doing what he ought; it was his own fault, and she gently reproached him with it. And having once arrived at this conviction, Prascovia Feodorovna was unable to eradicate it from her mind.

'You must know that he will pay no heed to any

one ; he does not take his medicine when it would do him good ; and above all, he adopts a position which must certainly do him harm—he will have his feet in the air.'

Then she related how he behaved with Guerassim.

The doctor gave an affable and contemptuous smile, which seemed to say, ' What is to be done ? These sick folk always have some whim, it is as well to humour them.'

When the doctor had finished his examination, he looked at his watch. Then Prascovia Feodorovna declared to Ivan Iliitch that, whether he approved of it or not, she meant to send that very day for the celebrated doctor to examine him in concert with Mikhaïl Danilovitch (the family physician).

' Pray, do not refuse. It is on my account,' she said ironically, intending to express, on the contrary, that she was doing this for his sake, and that he had no right to oppose her.

He remained silent, and frowned, feeling that the fiction woven around him was becoming so complicated that he could not find his way out of it. All that she cared about him was in her own interest : it was really for her own sake that she was doing what she professed to do ; she said it to him, however, in a tone meant to imply the contrary.

Towards half-past eleven the celebrated doctor arrived. The stethoscope was again used, and grave consultations went on, partly in Ivan's presence and partly in the adjoining room, respecting the spleen and the pylorus ; the queries and replies assuming such importance, that the question of life or death, which alone affected Ivan Iliitch, was quite forgotten. The result of the discussion proved that the spleen and the pylorus had both turned refractory ; Mikhaïl Danilovitch and the celebrity intended, however, to bring their authority to bear upon the case at once, and to show these organs the path of duty.

The celebrated doctor took leave with a grave but by no means dejected air. In reply to the timid question asked by Ivan Iliitch's eyes, ' Whether there

were any chance of a cure ? ' he replied that he could affirm nothing, but there certainly was a chance. The glance of hope which Ivan Iliitch then darted at the doctor was so pitiful that Prascovia Feodorovna herself perceived it, and began to cry as she left the room to give the celebrated man his fee.

The confidence engendered by the doctor's sanguine words did not last long, however. Ivan Iliitch again became depressed by the sight of the old room, by the self-same pictures, the curtains, hangings, and medicine bottles, and by his own sick and suffering body ; and he began to moan again. Finally he had morphia injected, and became torpid.

When he regained consciousness it was growing dark. His dinner was brought in. He could only take a little broth, and then a fresh night began.

After dinner, at seven o'clock, Prascovia Feodorovna entered his room in evening dress, with her fine bust displayed ; she was tightly laced, and her face was dusted with violet powder.

She had told him in the morning that they were going that evening to the theatre, where Sarah Bernhardt was playing on her tour. They had taken a box by Ivan Iliitch's express wish. He had forgotten this, however, and her dress startled him. Still he made no remark, remembering that he himself had told her to take a box and go, as it would be both an æsthetic and instructive amusement for their children.

Prascovia Feodorovna, feeling self-satisfied, but as embarrassed as if she had been a criminal, took a seat, asked after his health, rather for the sake of saying something (as he perceived) than of learning any particulars ; for what was there for her to learn ? She said the proper thing : that nothing in the world would have induced her to go to the theatre that night if she had not already taken the box, and that she felt it was impossible to let her daughter go alone with Petrichtchef, the examining magistrate, who so much admired Lisanka. She (Prascovia) did so wish she could have stayed with Ivan Iliitch.

However, he must be sure to follow the doctor's advice while she was away.

'Ah! Petrichtchef wanted to come in with me,' she added. 'May he come, and Lisanka too?'

'Yes, let them come!'

His daughter made her appearance in evening dress, with bare shoulders, which annoyed him. She made a fine display of them. Tall, healthy, and full of her engagement, she felt annoyed by the illness, sufferings, and coming death which stood in the way of her happiness.

Petrichtchef appeared also, in a dress-coat, with his hair arranged *à la Capoul*, his long sinewy neck clasped by a spotless collar, and showing a good deal of shirt front. His strong legs were encased in tight black trousers, and he held a single white glove and his opera hat in his hand. Behind them crept the young collegian in his gay new uniform, and wearing gloves; unfortunate lad, he had blue lines round his eyes which Ivan Iliitch knew how to interpret.

He always felt sorry for his son, whose sad, frightened looks were in sympathy with his own feelings. He fancied that, excepting Guerassim, Vassia was the only one who understood and pitied him.

They all sat down. Inquiries were made after his health. Then silence ensued, and finally Lisanka asked her mother where the opera-glass was. They began to dispute; each accused the other of having mislaid it. It was a strange time to choose for wrangling!

Petrichtchef, however, asked Ivan Iliitch if he had ever seen Sarah Bernhardt. At first the patient failed to understand the inquiry, then he replied: 'No! Have you?'

'Yes, in *Adrienne Lecouvreur*.'

Prascovia Feodorovna declared that she was especially wonderful in a certain piece, but Lisanka did not agree with her. The conversation then turned upon the grace and lifelike character of her acting, that eternal form of conversation which seems always the same.

In the course of the talk, however, Petrichtchef cast a glance at Ivan Iliitch, and held his peace. The others glanced too, and followed suit. Ivan Iliitch was glaring and rolling his eyes; he was evidently furious. They wished to atone for their want of consideration, but it was too late. Though it was necessary to break the crushing silence, no one could summon resolution to do so, and they all felt terrified at the idea of this conventional fiction being swept away and the truth coming to light at last.

Lisanka was the first to dart into the breach. In trying to conceal what they all felt, she revealed it clearly.

'Well, if we are to go, let us go!' said she, consulting her watch, a present from her father; and then, making an imperceptible signal to the young man, understood by themselves only, she smiled on him, and rose up, her dress rustling.

Then the others rose, said good-bye, and left the room.

Ivan Iliitch felt a little better when they were gone; the fiction had taken its departure. Still the pain remained behind, the same pain, the same terror; nothing could affect it now; it was visibly on the increase.

Again the moments and hours went by; always the same interminable pain, and the increasing horror of death.

'Send Guerassim here,' said the sufferer to Piotr.

X

WHEN the night was far advanced his wife again came in on tiptoe. Still he heard her. He opened his eyes, and closed them again almost immediately. She wanted to send Guerassim away and sit up herself instead.

But Ivan Iliitch opened his eyes again, and murmured:

'No. You can go.'

'Are you in much pain?'

'What does that signify?'

'Take some opium.'

He consented, and took some. Then she left him.

He remained plunged in an uncomfortable torpor until three o'clock in the morning. He dreamt that some one was forcing him into a deep, dark, narrow sack, and that however much he was pushed, there was no getting him in. The terrible thrusts tortured him. He grew frightened, wanted to tumble into the sack, and yet resisted; and this only led to more pushing. Then all at once it seemed that he broke loose and fell down. His consciousness returned. Guerassim was still there at his feet, drowsy, but calm and patient.

Iliitch himself was lying down, with his wasted legs resting on the moujik's shoulders; there was the same candle with its shade, and the same constant pain.

'Go now, Guerassim,' he murmured.

'It does not matter. I can stay.'

'No; leave me.'

He then drew away his legs and turned on his side, resting on his hand, and pitied himself.

He only waited for Guerassim to leave the room; then he burst into tears, and cried like a child. He wept over his hopeless condition, his frightful solitude, and the cruelty of the Divinity.

'Why hast Thou done all this? Why didst Thou create me? Why, oh why, dost Thou torture me so cruelly?'

He looked for no answer, still he wept because none came nor could come. The pain grew more acute: yet he never stirred nor summoned any one. He said within himself:

'Well, then, strike me! Again and again! Yet why? How have I offended Thee? Then why?'

He held his peace, no longer crying, but he scarcely breathed, as he listened attentively, not to a voice articulating sounds, but to one within him.

'What wouldst thou have?' seemed to be the meaning of the first thought he arrested.

'What would I have?' he slowly repeated to himself. 'What, indeed? Why, no more suffering, but life,' he replied.

And again he strained his attention so closely that he lost the perception of his pain.

'To live? To live how?' resumed the voice within him.

'To live as I used to do: to live comfortably and enjoy myself.'

'As thou didst live, comfortably and enjoying thyself?' questioned the voice.

Then he began to review the happiest moments of his happy life. Strange to say, however, all the best moments of this happy life now appeared to him under a completely different aspect, all except the recollections of his early childhood. In those remote days he recognized something really pleasant, a return of which might make life agreeable. But the *man* who had enjoyed so many things had ceased to exist; he seemed a different being.

As soon as he came to the period which had produced the present Ivan Iliitch, his former pleasures seemed to fade away and assume a vile and worthless aspect. The further he left his childhood behind him, and the nearer he came to the present, the more worthless and uncertain became the joys he had delighted in.

The change began with the Law Schools. There had been something really worth having even there, gay spirits, friendship, and hope; however, already by the time he had reached the upper classes, those happy moments had decreased. Then again, in the course of his functions under the governor, they had returned again. Memories of love yet lingered within him. After this everything became confusion, and the number of happy hours kept steadily decreasing as he approached mature age.

His marriage—so fortuitous, and fraught with so much disenchantment; the scent of his wife's skin, voluptuousness, and hypocrisy; his monotono ı

career and his pecuniary anxieties; one year of this, two, ten, twenty, all precisely the same. The longer he reflected the less life there seemed to have been in it all.

'It is as though I had begun to go down hill, just as I fancied I was going up. That is indeed just what happened. Society believed my star to be in the ascendant, whereas my life was in reality ebbing away; and now it has come to an end—I am dying. Well, what does it all mean? How can it be? It is impossible, quite impossible, that life should be so poor, so degrading! If it be really so, why should we die, and perish suffering? Why should we never realize the worthlessness of life so painfully till we are about to quit it? There is something in this which I cannot explain. Can it be that I have not lived the life I ought to have led?' was the sudden thought that occurred to him. 'But how can that be when I have always been attending to what I thought my duty?' he again asked of himself.

And he promptly repelled this unique solution of the problem of life and death, as something absolutely impossible.

'What dost thou want now? To live! Live how? Live as thou didst in court, when the usher cried, "Judgment is at hand!"'[1]

'Judgment at hand!' he thought; 'why, it is here, close to me! But I am not guilty!' he cried angrily. 'Wherefore? Guilty of what?'

His tears ceased to flow, as turning his face to the wall he revolved in his mind one solitary thought: 'Whence, oh whence, come all these horrors?'

However, under whatever aspect he surveyed this question, no answer came; and when the idea rose before him that all this was owing to his not having led the life he ought to have led, he at once reminded himself of his blameless career, and banished the suggestion.

[1] The customary formula in Russia for announcing that the court is about to sit.

XI

ANOTHER fortnight passed by. Ivan Iliitch remained altogether on his couch, refusing to go to bed. With his face turned almost always to the wall, he kept reviewing in solitude his sad and insoluble thoughts.

'What is it? Is this really death?'

And the voice within him replied: 'It is!'

'But why these sufferings?'

'For no visible reason. Because——'

And no other reply came.

Ever since Ivan Iliitch had become ill and paid his first visit to the doctor, he had been living in alternate states of confidence and dejection; at one time subject to despair, apprehending a dreaded, mysterious death; and then again hoping, and studying his bodily organs with interest. At times he had a perception of nothing but the fact that the spleen and intestines were failing for a time to discharge their functions; and then, at others, the terror of death rose up suddenly before him, haunting all his thoughts.

These two alternatives at first occupied almost equal intervals. But as his illness progressed, his fancies about the spleen lost their weight, and the apprehension of approaching death became stronger. He had only to go three months back and compare what he had then been with what he was now, to trace how steadily he had been proceeding downhill, and to lose every ray of hope.

During this last period of solitude—while he was living with his face turned to the back of the couch, and although in the midst of a populous city, and among his own family and a large circle of friends, yet in such perfect isolation that no such solitude could have been found in the depths of either earth or ocean—Ivan Iliitch simply lived in the past.

Scenes in his past life kept floating before his eyes. They always began with recent occurrences, and then kept wandering back and back to the distant period of childhood. Some stewed prunes placed before him reminded him of the French plums he had relished when a boy, with their peculiar flavour and their appeal to the palate when the kernel was reached, and these reminiscences evoked a complete succession of images of those younger days: his nurse, his brothers, his playthings. 'I must not think of them; it is too painful,' then thought Iliitch, and again he recurred to the present.

'That button on the back of the couch, and the folds of the leather—that leather was expensive, and yet it is not wearing well. We had a discussion about it—I can remember some other leather and another discussion,—that time when we tore my father's portfolio, and got punished for it. And then mamma brought us some cake.'

Again he found himself back in his childhood, and once more terribly affected. In vain he tried to drive away such reveries and think of something else.

Amid these reminiscences, too, the various phases of his illness kept rising up before him. In them also the further he went back the more life and happiness did he find: once, life and happiness had been synonymous.

'Just as my torture goes on increasing, so my whole life has grown worse from day to day,' he thought. 'There was a spark of life on the horizon in the far distance, quite at the outset, but since then everything has been growing darker and darker with increasing rapidity, just in proportion to its proximity to death.'.

The image of the stone falling with constantly increasing velocity became stamped upon his brain. Life and its chain of sufferings took swifter and swifter flight towards their close—the consummation of agony.

'I am on the wing now,' he thought.

He shuddered, tossed about, and tried to resist;

but he knew all the while that every effort was vain ; and his eyes, so weary of looking, yet compelled to see, became fixed on the back of the couch while he awaited the terrible moment, the sudden shock—destruction.

'It is vain to resist,' he would say to himself, 'but at least I would know why ; yet even that is impossible. People might explain it by saying that I have not lived as I ought to have done ; but it is absolutely impossible to admit that,' he would add, as he thought of the lawful, respectable, orderly life that he had led.

'Quite impossible to admit that,' he continued, with a smile on his lips, as if some one were watching him whom he could delude by that smile.

'No. There is no possibility of understanding it!' he concluded. 'These tortures and death—all for what?'

XII

A FORTNIGHT elapsed thus. During this period, what Ivan Iliitch and his wife had hoped for came to pass. One evening Petrichtchef made a formal proposal for Lisanka's hand. On the next morning, Prascovia Feodorovna entered her husband's room, pondering as to what words she should use to announce the news. That very night, however, there had been a change for the worse in the sick man's condition. His wife found him on the couch, but in a fresh position. He lay on his back, groaning and staring into vacancy.

When she spoke of remedies, he fixed his eyes on her, and she read so much hatred in them that she stopped short.

'For Christ's sake, let me die in peace!' said he.

She was turning to leave the room, but at that very moment his daughter entered to bid him good morning. He cast the same glance at her, and in reply to her inquiries after his health, dryly responded

that they would soon all be rid of him. Both women made no reply, but remained a little longer in the room, and then withdrew.

'How are we to blame?' said Lisanka to her mother. 'It is as though we were the cause of his illness! I am very sorry for papa, but why should he plague us like this?'

The doctor came at his usual hour. Ivan replied to him at first in monosyllables, without losing his expression of hatred; and at last he broke forth: 'You know very well that you can do nothing for me. Well, then, leave me alone.'

'We can relieve your sufferings,' observed the doctor.

'You cannot do even that. Leave me to myself.'

The doctor repaired to the sitting-room to tell Prascovia Feodorovna that her husband was much worse, and that there was but one remedy—opium—to assuage his sufferings, which must indeed be intolerable.

The doctor was quite right in describing Ivan Iliitch's physical sufferings as intolerable. But how much more intolerable were his mental sufferings? There lay the rub.

His mental sufferings arose from an idea that had occurred to him that night, while looking at Guerassim's good-humoured, sleepy face and prominent cheek-bones.

'What will become of me, supposing my life, the responsible part of it, should not have been what it ought?'

He began to think that what he had regarded as an absurd hypothesis—*i.e.*, that his life had not been a good one—might possibly be the fact, and that his former faint rebellion against what bore the sanction of society, a half-unconscious revolt soon trampled under foot, might, after all, be truth, and everything else false. His career, the arrangements of his material existence, his family life, all his social and professional interests, might have been nothing but a lie.

He attempted to defend his former principles, but all at once he became conscious of their weakness. There was nothing now left for him to defend.

'If this is the case,' he said to himself, 'I shall quit life with the consciousness of having irretrievably thrown away all that was entrusted to me. What must I do in that case?' Then he stretched himself on his back, and passed a mental review of his whole life.

In the morning, when he set eyes on the footman, then upon his wife, his daughter, and the doctor, each gesture and word of theirs confirmed him in the terrible truth which had dawned upon him that night. In them he saw himself reflected, with all that had composed his existence, and he clearly perceived what a terrible, gigantic lie it had all been, disguising the fact of life and death. This discovery increased his physical sufferings tenfold. He moaned, tossed about, and tore his clothes; they seemed to oppress and stifle him. This was the origin of his violence towards his wife and daughter.

A strong dose of opium was administered to him, and he fell into a torpor; but at dinner-time the crisis returned. He ordered every one out of the room, and seemed quite beside himself. His wife, however, came to his side and said:

'My dear Ivan, pray do something for my sake (*her* sake, indeed!). It can do you no harm, and often proves a comfort. What is it? Nothing, after all; even people who are not ill have recourse to it.'

He opened his eyes wide.

'What do you mean?' he said. 'Extreme unction? What good can that do? I will not have it! And yet——'

She burst into tears.

'Yes, dear Ivan, I will send for our own priest. He is a delightful man!'

'Charming! Very well,' he returned.

The priest came, and administered the sacrament. Iliitch meanwhile grew calmer and felt his doubts diminish, and, with them, his sufferings: a gleam

of hope dawned upon him. He again began to think of his pylorus, and the possibility of curing it. He received extreme unction with tears standing in his eyes.

After the ceremony he was laid down again, and feeling slightly better, the hope of life again dawned upon him. He began to consider an operation it was proposed to perform upon him. 'I want to live!' he said to himself.

His wife came to congratulate him, and used the phrases customary on such occasions. Then she added: 'You feel better, do you not?'

'Yes,' he replied, without looking at her.

Prascovia Feodorovna's dress, attitude, expression, even the sound of her voice, all affected him in the same way. 'All that has surrounded me and surrounds me still is but a lie, a farce intended to conceal life and death from my sight.'

With this thought his hatred revived, and with it his physical sufferings, and with these sufferings came the certainty of immediate and inevitable death.

Something strange was taking place within him. It seemed as if a gimlet were being bored through him, as if shot were pounding into his bowels: he could scarcely breathe.

As he articulated 'Yes' in answer to his wife's question his face assumed a terrible expression. Then having pronounced the word and looked into his wife's eyes, he turned himself over, with extraordinary energy considering his feeble condition, and cried: 'Go! Go! Leave me!'

From that moment commenced that shrieking which never ceased for three whole days; so terrible, that even when heard through two doors it inspired alarm. When he had apostrophized his wife, he saw himself already lost; there was no hope of a rally; the end was close at hand; and yet the problem of life still remained unsolved.

He began by crying: '*Ne khotchou!*' (I will not!), and the cry was prolonged on the final syllable: '*ou-ou-ou!*'

For three days he continued to shriek like this. He kept writhing about, already partially in the black sack into which an invisible power was thrusting him. He struggled, as a man sentenced to death might struggle in the executioner's hands, upon feeling himself powerless to escape. Each instant, in spite of his desperate efforts, he felt himself urged nearer and nearer to what he dreaded. He was tortured by the feeling of being pushed into a black hole, and yet more by the feeling that he could not enter it. What prevented him from doing so was the idea that his life had been no lie; it was his self-justification that pinned him down, pulled him back, and kept on torturing him.

Suddenly, some force struck him on the chest and flank, stifling him: he was thrust down the black hole; and there, at the bottom, he espied a ray of light. It was much like travelling by rail, when we imagine that we are moving forward, whereas we are in reality going back, and suddenly recognize our real position.

'Yes, it was not that!' he said to himself. 'But it doesn't matter. That may be done yet. What! that?'

Then he became silent.

It was at the end of the third day, an hour before the death agony commenced. At that moment the little collegian stole into his father's room and came up to his bedside. The dying man was still groaning and tossing his arms about wildly. His hand came into contact with his son's head. The little collegian seized hold of it, carried it to his lips, and burst into tears.

This was at the very moment when Ivan Iliitch, having been dashed down, saw the light, and suddenly understood that his life had not been what it ought to have been, but that there was yet time to redeem it. It was at the instant when he asked himself—'What! that?' and grew silent. It was then that he felt his hand kissed. He opened his eyes and saw his son. He felt sorry for him. His wife drew near

too, and he glanced at her. She was gazing at him open-mouthed in despair, with tears trickling down her nose and cheeks. He was sorry for her also.

'Yes, I am tormenting them,' he thought. 'They are sorry for me, but it will be the best thing for them that I should die.'

He wished that he could explain this to them, but he had no strength left to do it.

'After all, what is the use of talking; action is what is needed,' he thought.

He pointed out his son to his wife by the direction of his eyes, and said: 'Amen! I am sorry—and for you too——'

He meant to add *Prosti!* (Forgive!), but he said *Propousti!* (Let be!), and having no strength left to correct the mistake, dropped his hand in despair, feeling sure, however, that he should be understood in the right quarter.

Then, all at once, he perceived that the problem which had beset him was growing clearer in every direction.

'I am sorry for them. I should like to see them suffer less, and deliver them and myself too from my sufferings. How merciful and how simple!' he thought. 'And my pain, where is it now?—what has become of my pain?'

He concentrated his attention on this point.

'Ah, yes, here it is. Well, so much the worse! And where is death?'

He sought for his habitual dread of death, but could not find it. 'Where is it? What is death?'

He was no longer afraid, for death had vanished.

Where death had stood, there was light now.

'Ah! Then that is what it is!' he exclaimed aloud. 'How beautiful!'

All this transpired within him in a single instant; but that instant was decisive.

His agony lasted for two hours longer. Something seemed to seethe in his breast; a tremor passed through his wasted body. Then the seething and the rattle both died away.

'It is all over!' said some one standing at his head.

He heard the words, and repeated them to himself.

'Death is over!' he said to himself. 'It is done away with now.'

He attempted to ejaculate something, but could not get it out—then his face contracted—he was dead.

THE ROMANCE OF A HORSE

I

THE mists of night were dispersing. The dew-drops were sparkling afresh in the first rays of daylight. The moon's paling crescent was vanishing on the horizon. All nature was awakening; the forest was re-filling with life.

In the courtyard of the mansion all was animation. On all sides one heard the voices of peasants, the neighing of horses, and a continual stir amongst the straw where the stud had passed the night.

'Well, now, will you be quiet?' exclaimed the old stud-groom, throwing open the door. 'Hullo! where are you off to?' he continued, as with his whip he struck a young mare who sought to profit by the open door to make her escape.

Nestor, the old stud-groom, was attired in a short frock, girt round his waist by a belt with steel plates. His whip dangled over his shoulder, and a piece of bread, tied up in a handkerchief, hung from his belt. He was carrying a saddle and bridle.

The horses did not seem alarmed or offended by the jeering tone of the stud-groom; they pretended not to pay any attention to him, but slowly moved away from the door. Only an old mare, dark bay, with a long mane, pricked her ears and quivered all over. Profiting by the opportunity, a young mare then pretended to be frightened, and kicked an old horse standing motionless behind her.

'Come along,' cried the stud-groom, in a terrible voice, making his way towards the further end of the yard.

Out of the whole herd only one animal, a piebald horse, standing by itself under the pent-house, showed no signs of impatience. With its eyes half shut, it was licking the oaken beam of the shed with a serious and thoughtful air.

'No nonsense,' said the stud-groom, approaching and placing the saddle and the worn saddle-cloth he held in his hand on a heap of dung.

The piebald horse stopped licking, and, without moving, looked fixedly at old Nestor for some time. He neither smiled nor scowled, but took a step forward, sighed sadly, and turned his head aside. The stud-groom then passed his hand round the beast's neck to adjust the bridle.

'What have you got to sigh about, old fellow?' said he.

The horse, for his sole answer, moved his tail as though to say, 'Nothing at all, Nestor.'

Nestor put the saddle-cloth and then the saddle on his back. The horse lowered his ears as though to express his displeasure, and was called a rascal for it. The old man then tried to tighten the girth, whereupon the horse drew a long breath and swelled himself up like a barrel, holding his breath. Nestor stuck his finger in his throat and gave him a kick in the stomach, and the beast had to breathe the wind out again. Although fully persuaded that all resistance was useless, the horse thought it his duty to express his discontent.

Once saddled he began to champ his bit, although he must have known for a long time that this occupation could not give him any enjoyment. Nestor scrambled on to his back, took his whip in his hand, arranged his frock, settled himself sideways in the saddle, and jerked the reins. The horse then raised his head, meaning to express by this that he was quite ready to obey, and waited. He had long since learned that before starting there were a number of orders to be given to the young groom, Vaska.

And, indeed, Nestor began to shout, 'Vaska, have you let the mares out? What are you up to? Are

you asleep? Open the gate and let the mares out first,' etc.

The gate creaked on its hinges. Vaska, angry and half asleep, held his horse's rein with one hand and let out the mares.

They passed out one after the other, sniffing at the straw. The young ones came first, then came the little colts, and afterwards the gravid mares, who passed slowly through the gateway shaking their big bellies.

The young mares grouped themselves together in couples, sometimes in larger numbers. They at first put their muzzles on their companions' backs, and were thus unable to pass through the gateway. Hence they tasted the whip, and then they separated with lowered heads.

The sucking foals, losing sight of their mothers, neighed in answer to their summonses. One naughty little mare lowered her head and flung out her heels with a loud neigh as soon as she felt herself at liberty. She dared not, however, put herself before the old grey mare, Jouldiba, who always walked with serious step at the head of the herd.

The courtyard, so lively a few minutes before, now became sad and deserted. Nothing was to be seen there save the posts and the heaps of straw. This spectacle of desolation seemed to sadden the old piebald horse, although he had long been accustomed to it. He slowly raised and then lowered his head as though bowing to some one, sighed as well as the girth would allow him to do, and then went off after the herd, limping on his stiff old legs, with Nestor on his back.

'I know what he is going to do now,' thought the old horse; 'as soon as we get into the highway, he will take his short pipe out of his pocket, strike a light with his flint and steel, and begin to smoke. I like that well enough. The smell of tobacco is pleasant in the early morning, and besides it reminds me of the good times now gone by. It is a pity that when the old fellow smokes he will always try to

swagger and sit on one side, always the same side, and, as it happens, I have a pain in that one. But I don't mind very much, I am used to suffer for the pleasure of others. I am even beginning to feel a certain satisfaction in suffering for others. Let him swagger, poor old Nestor. He can only do it when we two are alone together,' thought the old horse, as he walked slowly along in the middle of the road.

II

HAVING reached the bank of the river where the herd were to graze, Nestor alighted and unsaddled his old mount. By degrees the horses scattered over the meadow covered with dew, above which there hung a mist which slowly rose as the sun shone through it.

After taking off the bridle, Nestor scratched the neck of the old horse, who closed his eyes in token of gratitude. ' He is very fond of that, the old rogue,' said Nestor.

But the old horse really took no pleasure in this caress, it was only out of delicacy that he pretended to be delighted with it. He bowed his head as though in sign of assent.

All at once, and without any motive, Nestor, thinking, perhaps, that this caress might be considered by the old horse as a token of familiarity, roughly pushed his head back and gave him a hard smack with the bridle. Then he walked silently away, and sat down near an old tree where he was accustomed to pass the day.

This roughness vexed the old horse; still he did not let it be seen, but made his way towards the river, cropping the grass and twitching his tail. He paid no attention to the young mares and little colts who, rejoicing in their freedom, were running about and chasing one another hither and thither.

He knew from experience that there is nothing so

good for the health as to drink some fresh water in the morning, fasting. Thus he made his way to a point where the slope of the river bank was least steep, and plunged his muzzle into the stream. He began to draw up the water with his poor old lips, which were torn at their corners, and as his sides swelled out with the water he drank he felt an especial enjoyment, and shook his bare stump of a tail.

A little chestnut mare who always took pleasure in teasing the old fellow now drew near to him, pretending not to see him, and with the sole object of disturbing the water which he was drinking with so much enjoyment. The piebald horse had already finished, however, and he pretended not to notice the trick which the little mare tried to play upon him. One after the other he lifted his hoofs which were plunged in the stream, shook his head, and moved away to graze quietly, apart from the younger animals.

He grazed steadily for three hours, trying to do as little damage as possible to the grass with his hoofs. When he had finished, he settled himself on his four legs, letting the same weight rest on each so as to suffer as little as possible, and then went quietly to sleep.

There are all kinds of old age. There is a majestic old age, a hideous old age, and an old age which moves us to deep pity. There is, moreover, an old age which, although majestic, also moves us to pity.

This was the case with the old piebald horse. He was tall, standing fifteen hands one inch high. His coat had once been black and white, though now the black patches had become a dirty brown. He had three large dark patches ; one on the right side of his head, near the muzzle, extended half-way down his neck. His long mane, all matted together, was half white, half brown. The second patch was on his right side, extending half-way down to his belly. The third one covered his hind quarters and half his tail. The end of his tail was white.

His head, large and bony, with two deep hollows above his eyes, and a torn and blackened underlip,

seemed hung on to his thin, bent neck. Through the rent in the underlip one could see the tip of a blackish tongue, twisted to one side, and the yellow stumps of the animal's lower teeth. His ears, one of them slit, hung down on either side of his neck, and were but rarely lifted, even to drive away the flies. The only remnant of his forelock was a tuft of hair hanging behind his left ear. His bare forehead was sunken and rough, and his skin lay in deep wrinkles along his lean chaps. His veins stood out in knots on his head and neck, and these knots quivered every time that a fly settled on them. The old horse wore an expression of infinite patience and sorrow.

The animal's limbs seemed far too long for his body. His fore legs, curved like a bow, were swollen just above the hoofs, the left one having a large lump near the knee. His hind legs were better, but from rubbing against one another they had long since lost their hair. His flanks, although rounded, were bare, and covered merely with skin, which seemed to be glued to the spaces between his ribs. His bones showed plainly in his fleshless tail, from which every vestige of hair had disappeared.

An old wound, covered with thick white hairs, extended along his brown crupper. There was a sore on his right shoulder. His hind knees and tail were dirty, owing to a continual looseness of the bowels.

However, despite his hideous aspect, a connoisseur on seeing him would at once have recognized a well-bred horse. He would have added that only one breed of horses in Russia possessed such big bones, such hoofs, such an arched neck, and such a fine coat as this animal had once possessed.

There was, indeed, something grand about the horse's appearance, in his repulsive ugliness, and in the expression of pride and assurance characterizing him. He resembled a living ruin in the midst of the green meadows, surrounded by the young animals, who having scattered on all sides were filling the air with their neighings.

III

THE sun had already risen above the forest, and lit up mead and stream. The dew was slowly disappearing. Only a few drops were to be seen here and there. The morning mists were evaporating, leaving merely a few traces by the banks of the river. Some small white clouds were massing, but the air was calm. On the further side of the river a field of fresh green wheat could be seen. The scent of flowers and herbage perfumed the air. In the distance the cuckoo was calling, and Nestor, stretched upon his back, counted how many years he had still to live. The larks were soaring above the meadows. A hare, finding itself in the midst of the herd, fled at full speed, hid itself behind a tuft of grass, and cocked its ears. Vaska went to sleep with his head in another tuft.

The mares, taking advantage of their freedom, scattered on all sides. The older ones chose a quiet spot where they could feed without being disturbed, but they no longer grazed. They merely picked out juicy bits of grass, which they cropped with enjoyment.

Insensibly the whole of the herd drifted in the same direction. And again it was old Jouldiba who was at their head, and showed the way. The young mare Mouchka, who had dropped her first foal, kept up a continual neighing as she played with it. The young Atlasnaia, who had a coat as sleek as satin, played with the herbage, her head bowed down so that her forelock covered her muzzle and eyes. She kept tearing up a blade of grass, and then casting it aside, as she struck the damp soil with her shapely hoof.

One of the older colts, who had invented a new game for himself, ran for the twenty-sixth time round his mother with his tail in the air. Accustomed to

his lively ways, she continued to graze quietly, merely giving him a look from time to time out of the corner of her black eyes. One of the smallest colts, black, with a large head, and a forelock bristling between his ears, and with his tail still turned on one side as before his birth, followed his comrade's gambols with an amazed look, and seemed to be asking himself why the other was playing all these tricks. Some of these little ones seemed very much occupied. Others, deaf to their mothers' appeals, made off in another direction, neighing with all the strength of their young lungs. Others again rolled on the grass, whilst the stronger ones imitated the full-grown horses and grazed.

Two gravid mares quitted the herd, walking with difficulty and grazing in silence. Their condition was respected by the whole herd, which took care not to disturb them. If one of the young ones, bolder than the rest, ventured into their neighbourhood, a whisk of the tail or a movement of the ears was sufficient to recall her to order and show her the unbecomingness of her conduct.

The yearling colts thought that they were already too big to share in the gambols of their younger comrades. They grazed with a serious air, arching their graceful young necks, and shaking their little stumps of tails in imitation of their elders. Like them, they rolled on the grass, or mutually rubbed one another's backs.

The liveliest set was the group of two and three year old mares. They walked about all together, keeping away from the others like young girls. They would collect together, putting their heads on one another's necks, sniffing and jumping, and then suddenly they would gallop off with their tails in the air. The prettiest of the lot and the liveliest was a chestnut mare. All the others imitated her tricks, and followed her about everywhere. It was she who set the fashion.

She was especially lively that fine day, and felt very much inclined to amuse herself. It was she

who in the morning had disturbed the water which the old horse was quietly drinking; then, pretending to be alarmed, she had dashed off like an arrow, followed by the rest of the band, and Vaska had had all the trouble in the world to catch them. Having eaten her fill, she next rolled upon the grass; then, tired of this game, she began to tease and annoy the old mares by running in front of them. Seeing that one of the little foals was gravely sucking, she frightened it and amused herself with chasing it, pretending that she wanted to bite it. Its mother, in alarm, left off grazing when the little one gave vent to plaintive cries. However, the frolicsome creature did not hurt it. Satisfied with having amused her comrades, who were watching her with interest, she walked away as if nothing were the matter.

Then the notion occurred to her to turn the head of a grey horse which a peasant was riding in the distance. She halted, cast a proud look about her, turned her pretty head on one side, shook herself, and neighed in a soft and languishing fashion. The neigh expressed both passion and sadness. One could divine in it both promises of love and unfulfilled desire.

'In the forest the cuckoo calls to its mate, the flowers scatter their pollen one to the other. The quails tell their love tale in the tufts of rushes, and yet I, who am young and beautiful, have not yet known love.' This is what her neigh seemed to say as it echoed around and reached the grey horse.

He pricked his ears and stopped. The peasant gave him a blow with his whip, but the horse, under the charm of the appeal he heard, did not stir; in lieu thereof he began to answer the young mare. The peasant then grew angry, and gave him such a terrible blow across the ribs that he stopped short in his neighing and resumed his journey.

However, the little chestnut mare felt moved, and listened for some time to the echo of this interrupted reply, to the steps of the horse retreating further

and further away, and to the voice of the peasant grumbling. If the mere neigh of the little mare had thus sufficed to cause the grey horse to forget all his duties, what would have happened if he had seen her, with her eyes aglow, her nostrils dilated, and the whole of her beautiful form quivering?

But the frolicsome creature did not like to linger in thought. When the voice of the grey horse died away in the distance, she neighed mockingly and began to scrape the ground with her hoof; then, having caught sight of the old piebald horse sleeping peacefully, she ran to rouse and tease him.

The poor piebald horse was the butt of the young ones; they made him suffer even more than men did, and yet he had done no harm either to one or the other. Men had need of him, hence their excuse, but why did not the horses leave him alone? That was a thing which he had never been able to understand.

IV

HE was old. They were young. He was thin. They were plump. He was sad. They were lively. He was therefore a stranger, a being apart who could not inspire them with any sentiment of pity. Horses only have pity to spare for themselves. They are egotists.

Was it the fault of the poor old grey horse if he did not resemble the others, if he was old, thin, and hideous? It would seem to us that it was not his fault, but according to horses' logic it was otherwise. He was wholly in the wrong; and those who were young, strong, and happy, those who had the future before them, those who could lift their tails like plumes, and whose muscles quivered at the least touch, had all the best reasons in the world on their side. In his calmer moments the piebald horse himself thought, perhaps, that all the faults were on his side, that as his life was drawing to its close he

must pay for past enjoyments; but then he was only a horse, and occasionally he could not help revolting against the young creatures who punished him for that which was awaiting them in a more or less distant future.

Another reason for their cruelty lay in their aristocratic sentiments. Each of them was descended in a more or less direct line from the celebrated Smetanka. The piebald horse, however, was a stranger of unknown origin, bought three years back at a fair for eighty roubles paper money.

The chestnut mare, having decided to torment him, feigned to be merely walking by, and came up, pushing him as though by chance. He knew whence the blow came, and so, without opening his eyes, he drew back. The mare then turned round and pretended that she was going to kick out at him with her hind legs, whereupon he opened his eyes and walked calmly away. He no longer felt sleepy, so he began to graze again.

The tricky creature was not yet satisfied, however. Accompanied by her comrades, she again approached the old horse. A two-year-old filly, who was very stupid, and who imitated her comrade in all things and followed her about step by step, also approached the piebald, and like all imitators, overstepped the bounds of jesting.

Whenever the frolicsome chestnut mare drew near the old horse, she always pretended not to see him. She passed and repassed in front of him with a busy air, so that he often asked himself whether he ought to feel vexed with her, the more so as she was very amusing. She now recommenced her customary manœuvre, but her imitator went straight up to the old horse and kicked him. He showed his teeth, and with a rapidity which could not have been expected, threw himself upon her and bit her thigh. Then she rushed at him, and struck him with all her strength in his poor, lean ribs. The old horse snorted, and seemed about to assail her; but, finally, with a deep sigh, he turned the other way.

The young animals probably thought that the conduct of the old horse was a mortal insult to all of them. They did not give him another moment's rest throughout the day, and the stud-groom had to interfere several times to keep them in order. The poor old horse felt so unhappy, that when the time came to return home, he went up to old Nestor of his own accord, and felt happier and more at ease when the latter, after saddling him, mounted upon his back. God alone knew the thoughts that passed through the poor old animal's brain as he went off with Nestor in the saddle. Did he reflect bitterly over the cruelty of his young companions, or did he pardon them their offences with the contemptuous indulgence characterizing old age? His thoughts could not be guessed, so impenetrable was his aspect.

That evening some friends of Nestor's came to see him. While passing through the village he perceived their wagon at the door of his dwelling. He was in a hurry to join them, and so scarcely had he re-entered the courtyard than he jumped off the old horse, and went off without even unsaddling him, calling to Vaska to do so when he had finished his work.

Was it on account of the piebald's insult to a great-granddaughter of Smetanka? was it on account of the wound thus inflicted upon the aristocratic sentiments of the younger animals? one cannot say; but at all events that night all the other horses began to chase the old nag, who, still saddled, fled to escape the kicks aimed at him from all sides. At length he felt at the end of his tether, and could do nothing to escape his persecutors. In despair he stopped short in the middle of the courtyard.

Helpless rage was written on his face, and he laid back his ears. But at that moment there occurred an unexpected phenomenon which cooled the anger of the other animals as if by magic. The oldest mare of the herd, Viasopourika, abruptly approached the piebald, snuffed at him, and sighed. He, in return, gave vent to a deep sigh.

. . . . . .

There was something fantastic about the appearance of the old horse as he stood in the centre of the yard still saddled, with the moonlight streaming upon him. The others had surrounded him in silence, and were looking at him inquisitively, as if they had just heard something very interesting about him. This is what they learned.

V

'YES, indeed, I am the son of Lioubeski I and Baba. My name, according to the stud-book, is Maujik I, better known as Kolstomier, on account of my long and flowing tail, which had not its equal in all Russia. As for my descent, there is no horse as well bred as myself. I should never have told you so, however. You would never have learned it from my mouth if Viasopourika, who was with me at Krienovo, had not recognized me. You would not have believed me if I had not got Viasopourika as a witness. So I should have continued to keep silence; besides, I had no need of your pity. But you yourselves have willed it thus.

'Yes, I am that same Kolstomier whom connoisseurs sought after. The count had me sold because I beat his favourite, Liabed, in a race. When I came into the world I was ignorant of what the word "piebald" meant; I only knew one thing, that I was born. The first remarks made about my coat astonished my mother and myself. I was probably born during the night, for in the morning, having been cleansed by my mother, I was already on my feet. I remember that I experienced a vague, indefinite longing, which I was not in a condition to express, and that everything that was taking place about me seemed extraordinary.

'Our stable opened into a warm, dark passage, having a grated door, through which everything could be seen. My mother was holding out her

dugs to me, but I was still so simple that I pushed them away with my muzzle. All at once, however, my mother drew me on one side; she had just caught sight of the head stableman, who was approaching. He looked through the grating, and then opening the door he said: "Hullo, Baba, so you have dropped your foal?"

'He then came in and put his arms round me. "Look at him, Farasei," said he, laughing, "he 's like a magpie!"

'At this moment I broke from his arms, and stumbling, fell on my knees. "Come, you little devil," said he.

'My mother was uneasy, but not daring to defend me she contented herself with sighing deeply, and then moved away. All the other grooms gathered about us, and began to examine me. They all laughed as they noticed the spots on my coat, and gave me the funniest names. Neither I, nor even my mother, could understand the meaning of their words. Until that moment there had never been a piebald horse in our family. Still, we did not think there was any harm in it. As to my shape and strength, they were admired from the day of my birth.

'"I should just think he was lively; one can hardly hold him," I heard the stableman say.

'Shortly afterwards the head groom came in. He was astounded to see me, and he even seemed shocked. "Whoever does this monster resemble?" said he; "the general will never keep him. Ah! Baba, you have played me a dirty trick," he added, addressing my mother. "If the little fellow had merely a blaze on his face, it would not matter; but he is a piebald."

'My mother did not answer, but, as always happens in such cases, she gave vent to a deep sigh.

'"What the deuce is he like? He is a regular brute!" resumed the head groom; "he can never be kept for the stud. What a pity! He is well shaped—very well shaped," he added, examining me.

'Some days later the general came in person, and the indignant outbursts respecting the colour of my coat recommenced more furiously than ever. Every one seemed angry, and accused my mother of being the cause of it, adding, "He is very well shaped, though."

'Until the spring we colts were left with our mothers in the well-warmed stables. Sometimes, however, when it was fine and the snow began to melt away under the rays of the springtide sun, we were allowed to go out into the large yard, strewn with clean straw. It was there that I for the first time made the acquaintance of all my relations, who were very numerous. It was there, too, that I saw all the celebrated mares with their little ones. Amongst others, there were old Gallanka, Mouchka, Smetanka's daughter, and Krasmouchka. Once together they sniffed one another and rolled on the clean straw like simple mortals. I shall never forget that court-yard full of the finest mares that can be imagined.

'You may be astonished to learn that I also was once young and frolicsome, but so it was. Viaso-pourika, whom you see here, was only a year old then. She was a nice, lively little filly, but, without offence, one of the ugliest of the stud. She can tell you so herself. My coat, which had displeased the men who saw me so much, met with great success amongst the horses. They surrounded me and began to admire and play with me. Then I began to forget mankind's insulting remarks and to enjoy my success. However, I soon experienced the first grief in my life, and it was my mother who was the cause of it.

'When the snow had quite melted, when the sparrows were twittering as they hopped about, and when the air became soft and balmy as it usually is in spring time, my mother completely changed in her manner towards me. Her temper wholly altered. She all at once began to play and run about the yard in a way which was not at all suitable to a matron like herself. At times also she became thoughtful and melancholy; she would neigh, bite her female

friends, and rush at them, and then sniff at me, and drive me away with a discontented air.

'One day, however, the head groom came, had a halter slipped over her head, and led her away. She neighed, whereupon I answered and ran after her, but she went off without giving me a farewell look. The stableman, Farasei, caught hold of me just as the door closed behind her. I tore myself from his grasp, however, and dashed to the door; but it was already closed, and I only heard my mother's neighings in the distance. These neighings were no longer like those she addressed to me; they had quite another meaning. A powerful voice replied to her call. It was, as I learned later on, that of Dobrii I, whom two stablemen had brought to pay a visit to my mother.

'I cannot recollect at all how Farasei left me, I was too sad. I felt that I had lost my mother's love for ever. "And all because my coat is piebald," I said to myself angrily, thinking of the offensive remarks of mankind.

'I was then seized with such a fit of rage that I began to strike my head, my knees, and body against the boundary wall until I stopped from exhaustion. Some time afterwards my mother returned. I heard her approaching with a light step. When the gate was opened, and I caught sight of her, I could scarcely recognize her, she was so changed. I thought that she looked younger and handsomer. She sniffed at me and neighed, and I at once saw that she no longer cared for me at all. She spoke to me about Dobrii's comeliness, and his love for her. Their meetings continued, and my intercourse with my mother grew colder and colder every day.

'Shortly afterwards we were let out to pasture. From that time forward I experienced fresh delights which consoled me for my vexations. I had friends and companions. We learned to eat grass, to neigh like full-grown horses, and to gambol around our mothers with our tails in the air. It was a happy time. All the other horses and foals admired me,

they all liked me, and all my escapades were forgiven. However, it was at that period that something terrible befell me.'

As the old horse said this he sighed deeply. The day was now beginning to break, and suddenly the gate creaked on its hinges, and old Nestor appeared. The horses separated on his entrance, and the stud-groom, after arranging the saddle on the old piebald, let out the herd.

VI

AS soon as the horses returned to the yard that evening they again gathered about the old one, who resumed his story as follows :

' In the month of August I was separated from my mother, but I felt no grief at this. I saw that she would shortly give birth to a foal, who proved to be my younger brother, the famous Oussane, and so I was relegated to a back seat. I had no jealousy as regards the newcomer ; only I perceived that on my side I no longer felt the same towards my mother. I knew, moreover, that, once separated from her, I should find myself in company with my young friends, and that I should run about every day in the fields and meadows.

' I had Mirlii as a companion in my stall. He was a saddle-horse, and when he grew up he had the honour to be ridden by the Emperor, and was depicted in his portraits. At that period, however, he was only a little colt, with a satin coat, a gracefully arched neck, and straight, clean limbs. He was always in a good temper—always ready to play, to lick his friends, and to make game of men and horses. We became united by a tender friendship from always being together ; however, this friendship was of short duration. As I have told you, he was of a lively and frivolous disposition. From a very early age he had begun to pay attention to the little fillies. He always made game of my simplicity.

Unfortunately, stung by his jests, I imitated his example, and soon afterwards fell in love. This precocious amour was the cause of a great change that took place in my lot.

'This is the story of my love in a few words. Viasopourika was a year older than myself. We had always been great friends, but towards the close of the autumn I suddenly perceived that she tried to avoid me. I have not the courage to tell you in detail the story, so full of painful recollections to myself. She herself, however, remembers the fatal passion which I entertained for her. At the moment when I was revealing my sentiments to her the stableman threw himself upon us, drove her away, and began to beat me. That evening I was shut up alone in a loose box, where I passed the night, neighing despairingly, as if from a presentiment of what was awaiting me.

'In the morning the general, the head groom, and the stablemen visited me. Every one spoke and gesticulated at once. The general was in a rage with the head groom, who excused himself by saying that he was not to blame, and that it was all the fault of the stablemen. The general then declared that he would have every one thrashed, that little stallions could not be kept like that; whereupon the groom promised that all the general's wishes should be carried out, and then every one went away. I did not understand it at all, but I had a presentiment that something was being plotted against me.

. . . . . .

'On the following day I became what I am now, and left off neighing for ever. I grew utterly indifferent to all about me. I was plunged in bitter thoughts. At first I was overcome with deep discouragement. I even left off eating and drinking. As to games, they no longer existed for me. At times the idea occurred to me to kick, to neigh aloud, and to gallop round my comrades, but then I at once sadly asked myself, "Why? with what object?" and I bowed my head.

'One evening the groom, who had put a cord round my neck, was walking me up and down in front of the courtyard, just as the herd returned from the fields. I saw at a distance the cloud of dust and the well-known outlines of our mares. I heard the tramp of their hoofs and their mirthful neighing. I stopped short, despite the cord which cut into my neck and caused me to suffer tortures, and I watched the herd as one would watch one's eternally vanished happiness.

'As the herd drew near I could make out one by one the faces of all my old friends. Some of them perceived me and stared at me. The groom kept pulling the rope, but I paid no attention to him. I lost my head and began to neigh and jump about, but my voice sounded strange and ridiculous. They did not laugh in the herd, but I could see that they turned away their heads out of politeness. It was plain that I inspired them with pity. I looked ridiculous in their eyes, with my thin neck, my enormous head—I had grown terribly thin—my long legs, and, above all, my absurd gait, as I began to trot round the groom. No one replied to my appeal, they all turned away from me with one common accord. Light suddenly flashed across my mind, and I at length understood what a gulf separated me from the truth. In despair I followed the groom, and I do not know how I reached my loose box.

'From early youth I had been inclined to melancholy and reflection, and my misfortunes developed this predisposition of mind. My coat, which inspired mankind with such contempt, my exceptional position amongst the stud, which I could not yet quite understand, caused me to reflect seriously on the injustice of men. I thought bitterly of the inconstancy of maternal love and of feminine affection in general and I tried to frame for myself a precise notion of that strange race of animals called men. I strove to understand their character by weighing their actions. On one occasion during the winter festivals I remained all day long with nothing to eat or drink, and I

subsequently learnt that it was because all the stablemen were dead drunk. That very day the head groom, in making his round, visited my box, and seeing that I had no food he broke out into a rage against the absent stableman and went off grumbling. On the following day, when the stableman brought our food, I noticed his extreme pallor and something painful about the expression of his whole body. He angrily thrust my hay through the grating, and when I tried to put my muzzle on his shoulder gave me such a blow with his fist that I drew back alarmed. He was not satisfied with that, however, for he also gave me a kick in the stomach as he growled: "If it had not been for this mangy brute he would not have done anything to me."

'"How is that?" inquired one of his comrades.

'"Well, he does not look after the count's horses, but as to his own, he pays him two visits a day."

'"Have they given him the piebald, then?"

'"Given or sold, I don't know; but I might let all the count's horses die of hunger and he wouldn't say a word about it; whereas, if one dares to let his colt lack anything, it is quite another matter. 'Lie down,' he said to me, and then he began to whip me. He isn't a Christian; he has more pity for a beast than for a human being. One would think that he had never been baptized. He counted the blows himself. Even the general never whipped so hard; the whole of my poor back is one wound. He really can't have a Christian soul."

'I understood very well what the stableman said about the whipping and Christian pity. As to the rest, I could not quite understand what was meant by the words, "his colt." I gathered from them, however, that the stableman saw some connection existing between the groom and myself. But what that connection was I could not at that time comprehend. Later on, however, when I was kept apart from all the other horses, I clearly realized what was meant.

'The words, "my horse," seemed to me as illogical

as " my earth," " my air," and " my water." Still they made a deep impression upon me. I have reflected at length since then. It was only much later, when I learnt to know mankind better, that I could explain all this to myself. Men, you see, allow themselves to be guided not by facts but by words. And one term which has a very great importance for them is the following: " Mine." They make use of it in speaking of various living beings, of the earth, of their fellow-men, and even of horses. It is usual, too, in speaking of any object that only one person should be able to qualify it with the word " mine." The person who is able to apply the word " mine " to a very large number of objects is considered to be the most fortunate of them all.

' The reason of this I cannot tell you. For some time I asked myself whether the question of interest were not the mainspring of it all, but I rejected this idea. And this is why I said to myself, " Many people look upon me as their property, and yet they do not make use of me; it isn't they who feed me and take care of me, but strangers to whom I don't belong—stablemen, coachmen, and so on."

' A long time elapsed before I formed a clear idea of this word " mine," to which men attach so much importance. I can assure you, however, that it is nothing but the expression of an unworthy bestial instinct which men call the sentiment or right of ownership.

' A man says " my house," and does not live in it; a tradesman says " my shop," and never sets foot in it, or " my drapery establishment," and never takes a yard of stuff for his needs. There are men who say " my estate " without ever having seen it; there are even some who apply the word " mine " to their fellows, to human beings whom they have never seen, and whom they wrong in every possible or imaginable way. They also say " my wife " in speaking of a woman whom they consider to be their property, but who, nevertheless, is living with some other man. The main object of that strange animal

called man is not to do that which he thinks right and just, but to have the power of applying the word "mine" to the greatest number of objects. That is the fundamental difference between ourselves and mankind; and frankly, without speaking of other matters, this difference alone would suffice to place us on a far higher level than theirs in the scale of creation.

'Well, this right to call me "my horse" was given to our head groom. This discovery greatly surprised me. I had three sources of grief, my coat, my sex, and this way of treating me as a piece of property—I, who only belonged to myself and God, as is indeed the case with all living creatures. The results of this state of affairs were numerous. I was better fed and better cared for, but I was also separated from the other horses and put to harness much sooner than my comrades. Scarcely was I three years old than the men about me wished to put me to work. The first time that I was harnessed, the groom who imagined that I was his property was present. Fearing that I should offer a strong opposition, they held me by ropes, and then they put a large leather cross on my back and fastened it to the two shafts of the vehicle, so that I might not smash the latter by kicking with my hind legs. These precautions were quite unnecessary, however. I only asked for the opportunity to show my love of work.

'Great was their astonishment when they saw me walk like an old horse. After that I was harnessed every day and taught to trot. I made progress so rapidly that one morning the general himself was astounded at it. However, strange to say, from the moment when the groom, and not the general, applied that word "mine" to me, my gifts no longer seemed to have the same value. Whenever my brothers the stallions were put to, the length of their paces was marked; they were harnessed to gilded carriages, and were covered with fine trappings. I was harnessed, however, to very plain vehicles, and only went out with the groom when he went to

execute any commission. And all this because I was a piebald, but above all, because I no longer belonged to the count, but to the groom. To-morrow, if we are still alive, I will tell you what results this change of ownership had for me.'

All day the horses showed great respect for old Kolstomier. Only Nestor continued to treat him as before.

VII

THE moon again lit up the old courtyard, and Kolstomier, surrounded by his friends, continued his story in these words:

'The most extraordinary consequence of my belonging neither to God nor to the count, but to a mere groom, was that the very quality which in other horses is highly esteemed, became in me a crime, and was the cause of my being exiled. This was my rate of trotting.

'They were driving the general's favourite horse Liabed round the ring when the groom and I, returning from one of our excursions, approached the group. Liabed passed before us. He was going at a fair pace, but it was all very well for him to show off, I could trot round faster than he could. He passed before us. I made a step in the direction of the ring, and the groom did not check me.

'"Suppose I try the pace of my piebald," said he, and when Liabed came round to us a second time I started with him. During the first circuit, as he was already well under way, he headed me, but at the second I had got up speed, and I caught him and distanced him. The race began again, and I had the same success. Decidedly I was the faster trotter. Every one was astounded. The general begged the groom to have me sold as speedily as possible, and to some one at a distance. All haste was made to obey his orders, and so I was sold to a dealer.

'I did not remain long in his hands. Fate was

cruel and unjust towards me. I was deeply hurt, and had but one thought, to leave my native place at once. My position there was too painful. The future belonged to the others. Love, glory, freedom awaited them. As to me, I must work and humiliate myself all my life. And why such injustice? Because I was a piebald and the property of a groom.'

Kolstomier was unable to tell any more of his story that evening. An event took place in the courtyard which disturbed the whole herd.

The mare Koupchika, who had been listening to the old horse's story with interest, suddenly began to shiver, and walked slowly away towards the shed. All at once she commenced to groan louder and louder. She lay down, rose up, and then lay down again, whereupon the old mares drew near, and at once saw what was the matter. As to the young ones, they were so moved that they could not listen to Kolstomier's story any longer.

The next morning a new little foal was standing beside the mare. Nestor, upon perceiving it, called a stableman, who took it up, and led the mother away to a loose box. The other horses repaired, as usual, to the fields.

VIII

THAT evening, as soon as the gate had closed behind Nestor, and silence was restored, the old horse continued his narrative:

'I have had plenty of occasion to observe horses and men during my peregrinations,' he said. 'I remained longest with two owners—a prince, who was an officer in the hussars, and a good old lady, who lived at Moscow, near the St. Nicholas Church. The time that I spent with the hussar was the best and most pleasant of all. Although he was the cause of my ruin, and although he never cared for anything in the world, I loved him, and still love him with all the strength of my horse's heart. What pleased me

about him was that he was young, handsome, happy, and rich, and that, probably on account of all that, he cared for no one. You perfectly understand the sentiment that so often impels us. His coldness, and my dependent position, only served to heighten my love for him. "Kill me, torture me," I thought; "I shall only feel happier if I suffer at your hand."

'He bought me of the dealer to whom the groom had sold me for eight hundred roubles. As I have already told you, those were the happiest hours of my existence. The hussar had a mistress. I knew it, because I took him every day to see her, and often drew them about together. His mistress was handsome, so was he; and his coachman did not yield to them as regards good looks. This is how my time passed: In the morning a stableman came to attend to my toilet. He was a young peasant. He opened the door of my loose box, which he swept out carefully; then he took off my cloths and rubbed me down. I nibbled at his fingers and gaily struck the ground with my hoofs to thank him; then he washed me, and, once my toilet completed, he looked at me admiringly. After placing some hay and oats in the rack and manger he went away, and the head coachman came to see that all was in order.

'This coachman, whose name was Teofane, resembled his master; neither of them was afraid of anything, neither of them loved any one in the world, and it was for that very reason that every one loved and admired them. Teofane always wore a red shirt and a coat and trousers of black velveteen. I liked to see him on feast days, when, well dressed and with his hair nicely arranged, he came into the stables, and cried in a ringing voice, as he gave me a smack on the thigh, "Come, you animal, what are you up to?"

'I understood that it was all a joke because he had never hurt me, and I pricked my ears and smiled.

'We also had a black stallion in the stables who was harnessed with me sometimes of an evening. His name was Polkane. He had a bad temper, and

could not understand a joke. My box was next to his, and I often quarrelled with him; Teofane, however, was not afraid of him. On one occasion Polkane and myself took the bit between our teeth in the principal street of Moscow, the Kowznetskii moste. However, neither our master nor the coachman was in any way alarmed. They cried out, "Look out there," laughingly turned to the right and left to avoid accidents, and did not run over anybody. It was in their service that I lost my most precious qualities, indeed half my life. It was in their service that I was watered at the wrong time, and had my knees broken. But all the same I do not complain. I was happy then.

'At noon the stableman came to comb my mane and forelock and polish my hoofs, then they put me to. Our sledge was very small, in plaited straw covered with velvet, the harness being ornamented with steel plates of unheard-of elegance. As soon as I was ready, Teofane, in a fine caftan, and with a red sash girthed up to his arm-pits, came to see if everything was all right. Satisfied with his examination, he climbed into his seat, joking, took the whip in his hand, although he never touched me even with the tip of his finger, and then said: "Let go."

'I gathered myself together, and advanced proudly and gracefully. Every one stopped as we went by. The cook, who had come out to pour away some dirty water, paused in her task to look at us. The peasants stared at us open-mouthed. At last we stopped in front of the porch. Sometimes two or three hours passed before my master made his appearance. In the meantime, surrounded by the servants, we chatted gaily, and exchanged all the news we had heard; then, being unable to keep still any longer, we took a short turn, and returned to await our master's pleasure. At length, sounds were heard in the ante-room—the valet Fiekon, who wore a black coat, ran out and called to us to draw up. Teofane complied, and our master advanced with a careless step, his sword clanking, and his handsome

head partly hidden by his shako and the beaver collar of his cloak. Without paying any attention to us, whom every one was admiring, he got into the sledge and we started. I always gave him a side-long glance, shaking my head and gracefully turning my neck.

'"The prince is in a good humour," I said to myself, when I saw him address Teofane with a smile, and I endeavoured to do honour to my master.

'"Look out!" cried Teofane to the crowd who halted as we passed.

'My greatest pleasure was to come across a trotter and beat him. As soon as Teofane and I caught sight in the distance of a rival worthy of us, we dashed off. Without appearing to notice them, we gained on them by degrees. Now we are level with the sledge: we are abreast of the horse. Now he is behind us, and proud of our success, though without deigning to show it, we continue on our way.'

Kolstomier had reached this point when the gate creaked; Nestor entered, and the old horse's story was interrupted.

The sky had been overcast since early morning, not a drop of dew had fallen to refresh the earth. In the evening the horses grouped themselves as usual about the old one, and he resumed his tale:

'My happy life was not of long duration,' said he. 'At the close of the second winter I experienced the greatest joy of my life, which was, alas! followed by a terrible misfortune. It was carnival time. We went with the prince to the races. I saw my old comrades Atlasnii and Bitchek there. I did not quite understand what they were doing. However, our master alighted and ordered Teofane to go into the ring. I remember that I was taken into the ring and placed beside Atlasnii. At the first turn I left him behind, and was greeted with cries of triumph. The crowd followed me, and several people offered the prince five thousand roubles for me. He answered, smiling and showing his white teeth, "He is not a horse, he is a friend. I would

not part with him for mountains of gold. Good-bye, gentlemen."

'So saying he got into the sledge again, giving his mistress's address to the coachman. Off we went. It was the last happy day of my life.

'We reached his mistress's house; she had gone off with another man. The prince learnt this from her maid. It was now already five o'clock. However, he ordered the coachman to follow in pursuit, and without giving me time to breathe, I was started off at full speed. For the first time in my life I was mercilessly beaten; for the first time in my life, also, I stumbled. I tried to stop, but my master cried, "Go on, make haste!" and we were off again at a gallop. We caught them up after a run of twenty-five versts. I could not eat, and I shuddered all night long. In the morning they gave me some water, and from that moment I was a ruined horse. I was tortured; that is what men call doctoring. My hoofs shed their horn, my legs became swollen and bent. I grew weak and apathetic.

'Then I was sold to a horse-dealer, who fed me up with carrots and other things. Without curing me he improved my looks; my strength did not return, but any one, unaware of this, might have been deceived by my appearance. As soon as a customer presented himself, the dealer, armed with a whip, hit at me until I was wild with rage and began to caper about. At length an old lady bought me of him.

'She always went to the St. Nicholas Church, and beat her coachman every day. The poor fellow used to come and weep in my box. It was then that I learned that tears have a slightly bitter taste, not unpleasant. Some time afterwards the old lady died. Her steward then took me into the country and sold me to a pedlar. I had wheat given to me to eat, and grew yet more ill. Then I was sold to a peasant, who put me to the plough. Ill-fed and ill-cared-for, I had also the misfortune of being wounded in the leg by a piece of steel. I was laid up again;

the peasant swopped me to a gipsy, who made me suffer martyrdom, and at length sold me to our steward. Thus it happens that I am amongst you.'

The whole of the stud remained silent.

IX

ON returning home on the following day the herd met their master, who was with a stranger. Old Jouldiba, as she approached the two men, gave them a questioning look. The master was still quite a young man, the other was an old soldier with a puffy face. The old mare went by them quietly, but the young ones were moved and astonished, especially when their master placed himself in the middle of them and pointed out something to his friend.

'I bought that dapple-grey mare off Vageikoff,' said he.

'And that young mare with the white foot, where does she come from? She is very pretty,' remarked the old soldier.

'She is one of the Krienovo breed,' replied the owner.

However, they could not examine all the horses in this way; so they called Nestor, and the old man came up hastily on horseback, taking off his hat as he did so. The old piebald hobbled along as quickly as his damaged legs would let him. He even tried to gallop to show his good will.

'There is not a better mare than that one in Russia,' now exclaimed the owner, pointing to one of the young ones.

The stranger admired her out of politeness. He was deeply bored, though he pretended to be interested in the stud. 'Yes, yes,' he replied, in an absent tone.

After a little time, when they had passed a considerable number of horses in review, he could no longer restrain himself, but said: 'Well, shall we go?'

'We will go if you like,' replied the master, and then they walked away towards the gate.

The stranger, happy at this release, grew more animated at the idea that they were going back to the house, where he could quietly eat and drink and smoke. On passing Nestor, who still stood awaiting orders, he struck the piebald horse on the crupper with his large hand, saying: 'It is very funny, but I had an animal just like this one. I told you about him, do you remember?'

The master, seeing that his visitor was no longer interested in his horses, paid no attention to what he was saying, but followed the herd with his eyes. Suddenly he heard a weak and trembling neigh. It was the old piebald who had neighed, stopping short, however, astounded by his own temerity. Neither the master nor the stranger paid any attention to him. They made their way towards the house.

Old Kolstomier had recognized in the old officer his well-beloved master, the hussar.

X

A COLD drizzling rain had been falling all the morning, but within the master's house it was not noticed at all. The master, his mistress, and the old officer were seated at a well-served table. The mistress was *enceinte*. She kept herself very stiff and upright, but the outline of her figure was already prominent. Seated at table before the tea-urn, she gracefully discharged her duties as mistress of the house.

The master held a box of cigars ten years old. Nobody possessed their equals according to him. He was a handsome young fellow of five-and-twenty, dressed according to the latest fashion by a London tailor. Various trinkets adorned his watch-chain, and fine turquoise sleeve-buttons his wrist-bands. He wore his beard and moustache like Napoleon the Third.

His mistress wore a gown of silk muslin with a pattern of large bouquets of flowers. Her hair was fastened up with some large gold pins and her arms were covered with bracelets. The tea-urn was silver and the service Sèvres china. The footman, in a black coat and blue waistcoat, stood as upright as a post by the door. The furniture and hangings had an air of wealth. Everything was rare, valuable, and in the latest fashion ; everything was fine, but taste and real elegance were wholly lacking.

The owner, an enthusiastic sportsman, was one of those persons who are seen everywhere, at races and at theatres, who throw the finest bouquets to actresses and have the most fashionable mistresses. His friend the officer—Nikita Serpoukovsky—was forty, tall, strongly built, and bald, with a heavy moustache and beard. He must once have been very handsome, but now he showed signs of wear, both morally and physically. His debts were so considerable that to escape imprisonment he had been obliged to petition the Government for a berth in one of the Imperial breeding establishments. All that he wore had a stamp of especial elegance ; the ex-beau was plainly recognizable in him.

In his youth he had run through a fortune of a million roubles, and incurred debts to the amount of a hundred and twenty thousand more. This past inspired respect on the part of all his tradesmen, who at first gave him unlimited credit. Ten years had elapsed, however, his prestige was now waning, and he began to find life wearisome. He was acquiring the habit of getting drunk, which formerly had never happened to him. He could not, however, be accused of taking to drink, since he had been accustomed to it from his youth upwards. His former self-assurance, moreover, had now vanished ; his look was vague, his movements were undecided. This lack of assurance was harrowing in this old beau, who had been accustomed to make himself obeyed and admired by every one.

The owner of the house and his mistress had known

Nikita for a long time, and they now looked at him pityingly, making signs to one another, and striving to put him at his ease. The happiness and wealth of his friend only humiliated poor Nikita, however, and reminded him of his past, which had fled, alas! for ever. Still, he strove to overcome the emotion which seized on him.

'Smoke does not incommode you, I hope, Maria,' he said, addressing the mistress of the house with that blending of deference and familiarity with which one addresses a woman in her position.

He had no intention of wounding her feelings. On the contrary, in his present position, he was rather desirous of gaining her good graces, although he would have denied it had any one accused him of being capable of lowering himself to this point. Besides, he was sufficiently acquainted with the usages of society to know that one cannot adopt the same tone with a friend's mistress as with his wife.

As he took out his own cigar-case, the master of the house offered him a handful of cigars with an awkward air, saying, 'These are capital; take them.'

Nikita waved them aside, however, with a somewhat offended and humiliated look. 'No, thank you,' said he, opening his cigar-case.

'Try mine, I beg of you,' rejoined the other.

The young woman possessed more delicacy than her lover. She wanted to change the conversation, and began to speak rapidly. 'I am very fond of cigars, but I do not smoke because every one about me does,' she said, accompanying her words with an amiable smile. Nikita also replied by a smile.

'Come,' resumed the master of the house, who was blind to it all, 'you must take these. I have some others, but they are milder. Fritz, bring another box,' he added in German to the servant. 'Which do you like best?' he resumed, addressing Nikita, 'the big ones? Take the whole of them.'

He was happy to be able to show off before some one. He did not realize to what a degree he was

humiliating poor Nikita, who now lit a cigar and tried to give another turn to the conversation.

'What did Atlasnii cost you?' he asked.

'A long price,' was the reply; 'not less than five thousand roubles; but, on the other hand, I am quite satisfied now. You should see his stock.'

'Do they run well?'

'Rather, they have won three races—one at Toula, one at Moscow, and the third at St. Petersburg; and they had Vageikoff's horses running against them.'

'Atlasnii is rather too heavy for my taste,' replied Nikita.

'But the mares, they are very elegant. You shall see for yourself to-morrow; I have two beauties I want to show you.' And then the master of the house began to recapitulate his possessions again.

His mistress perceived that this conversation was hurting Nikita; and, so as to cut it short, she said to her lover: 'Will you take another cup of tea?'

'No, thanks,' he replied, continuing his conversation with his friend.

Seeing that there was no means of stopping it, she rose. Then the master of the house affectionately took her in his arms and kissed her.

Nikita smiled on seeing this, but when they disappeared behind the hangings covering the door, the expression of his face changed; it became sad, and even pained, with a certain shade of irritation.

XI

THE master of the house soon returned and sat down, smiling, face to face with his friend. They both remained silent. The former asked himself what else he could boast of to poor Nikita, who, on his part, sought for some way of showing that he was not at all so unfortunate as people believed. However, both experienced a difficulty in finding something to say.

'If we were only drinking, at any rate,' said Nikita to himself: 'this fellow is as dull as a funeral. We must drink, in order to become a little more lively.'

'Shall you stay here much longer?' he asked his host.

'A month, perhaps. But suppose we have supper; what do you think? Is supper ready, Fritz?' said the master of the house.

They then went into the dining-room, where a table laden with the most delicate viands and the rarest vintages awaited them. They drank and ate, and drank and ate again, and the conversation grew more and more animated. Nikita Serpoukovsky now recovered his courage, and spoke calmly of bygone times. They talked of women—gipsies, and ballet-girls, and French women.

'Well, you have left that Mathieu girl, then?' said his host.

This was the French mistress who had ruined Nikita.

'It wasn't I who left her, but she who left me. When I think of all the money I spent upon her, I really shudder. Nowadays I think myself very fortunate if I have a thousand roubles before me. And yet, of old—— Ah! I should like to leave Moscow and all my old friends. It is too painful to me to live amongst them.'

The master of the house felt bored at having to listen to Nikita; he would have preferred to speak about himself, or to brag about his wealth. Nikita, on his side, felt a need of talking of his past. His host filled his glass and waited for him to finish, anxious to speak of his horses and his Maria, who did not love him for his money, but for himself.

'I wanted to tell you that my stud——' he began, but Nikita interrupted him, saying:

'There was a time when I knew how to enjoy life and to spend money. You are talking of horses. Well, tell me which is your best?'

Thereupon his host, glad of the chance, began a

long story about his stud. However, Nikita did not let him finish it. 'Yes, yes,' said he, 'you don't keep horses to please yourself; it is from vanity—we know all that. With me, however, it was quite another thing. I told you to-day that I had a piebald horse, just like the old fellow that your stud-groom rides. What a horse that was! You cannot recollect him. It was in the year '42. I came to Moscow, I went to a dealer's, and there I saw a piebald horse. His shape and make pleased me. "What price?" I asked. "A thousand roubles." I bought him, and I never had, and I never shall have, a horse like that. You were too young then to judge horseflesh, but you must have heard about him. All Moscow admired him.'

'Yes, I have heard of him,' replied the master of the house impatiently; 'but I wanted to tell you that in my——'

'Ah! you have heard of him. Well, I bought him without knowing his pedigree. It was only later on that I learnt that he was the son of Lioubeski I. He had been sold on account of his coat, which displeased his master. Ah! that was a fine time. Oh! my youth, my youth.'

Nikita was now getting quite intoxicated.

'I was twenty-five, and had eighty thousand roubles a year,' he said; 'not a grey hair, and teeth like pearls. Everything succeeded with me in those days——'

'But there were no such good trotters at that time as there are now,' interrupted the master of the house. 'You know my horses——'

'Your horses? But are they to be compared with what there used to be? I remember it as if it were yesterday. I went with my piebald horse to the races. My other horses were not at Moscow at that moment. I did not care for trotters, I always preferred thoroughbreds. The piebald was my own harness horse. I had a handsome coachman at that time; he, too, ended badly. Well, as I was saying, I came on to the race-ground. "Serpoukovsky,"

said some one to me, "where are your trotters?" "My trotters? I haven't got any. I have only my piebald horse here, but I will bet that he can distance any one of yours." "Impossible." "Will you bet a thousand roubles?" I asked. Well, my piebald came in five minutes ahead of all the other animals, and my bet was won. But that is nothing. I covered with my horse a hundred versts in three hours. All Moscow knows it.'

And Nikita went on chattering so briskly that it was impossible for the master of the house to get in a single word. He looked despairingly at his guest, and kept filling his glass.

Daylight was now breaking. Nikita was still speaking with animation of his past exploits, and his host was listening to him in disgust. He at length decided to rise from his chair.

'Let us go to bed,' said Serpoukovsky. Then he also rose and staggered to the room that had been got ready for him.

The master of the house in the meanwhile joined his mistress. 'No, Nikita is unbearable,' said he. 'He got drunk, and went on gabbling without leaving off till now.'

'Besides, he ventures to make love to me,' replied Maria.

'Well, I am very much afraid that he will want to borrow some money of me,' said her lover.

Serpoukovsky, on his side, threw himself on to his bed fully dressed.

'I am afraid I bragged a good bit,' he thought. 'What does it matter? His wine is good, but he—he is a pig. One can detect the parvenu in him at once. But I am a pig too.' And then Nikita began to laugh. 'Once I kept women, and now I am kept. Yes, that Winkler girl keeps me. I take money from her. Suppose I undress—but I shall never be able to get my boots off. Hi! hallo there!' he cried. However, the servant had long since gone to bed.

Then Nikita sat up, took off his uniform coat, his

waistcoat, his trousers, and even one of his boots, but he could not manage to get the other off. Finally he threw himself back upon the bed and began to snore with all his might, filling the room with the odour of wine and tobacco.

XII

THAT night Kolstomier had no time to give to his recollections. Vaska, the under-groom, threw a rug over him, scrambled on to his back, and started off at a gallop. He left him till morning at the door of a tavern in company with a peasant's horse. The two animals licked one another in a friendly way, and in the morning when Kolstomier returned home he scratched himself furiously.

'I itch a great deal,' he said to himself.

Five days went by. Then the veterinary surgeon was called in and said: 'It is the mange; sell him to the gipsies.'

'Why so?' replied the groom; 'it would be better to kill him at once.'

The morning was fine. All the herd went off to the meadows. Kolstomier alone remained at home. A stranger, poorly clad, with a bespattered caftan, came up to him. It was the knacker. He took the horse by the halter and led him along. Kolstomier followed him docilely, halting on his bad legs. On passing through the gateway he wished to go to the drinking trough, but the knacker pulled the halter, saying: 'It isn't worth while.'

The knacker and Vaska made their way towards a lonely spot behind the out-buildings. Then the knacker gave Vaska the end of the tether, took off his caftan, and drew a knife and a sharpening stone from his boot. Kolstomier wanted to nibble the halter as he was accustomed to do, but Vaska would not let him. The monotonous noise made by the knacker in sharpening his knife lulled the old horse

to sleep. He stood motionless, with his lower lip hanging, the stumps of his teeth bared, and a quiver running up his right fore leg.

Suddenly he felt that something was put round his neck, and then his head was lifted up. He opened his eyes and saw two dogs standing in front of him. The one was watching the movements of the knacker with interest; the other, seated on his hind legs, looked as if he were expecting something. The horse, after examining them, began to rub his muzzle against the knacker's hand.

'They want to cure me probably,' he said to himself. 'Let them do it.'

And indeed he realized that they had done something extraordinary to his throat. He suddenly felt a sharp pain, shuddered, staggered, recovered his balance, and waited for what might happen. It happened that something warm and wet flowed down his neck and chest; he drew in a long breath and experienced great relief. Then he closed his eyes and bent his head, which nothing seemed to keep up. His legs were seized with a fit of trembling, his whole body quivered. He was not in any way alarmed, but he felt surprised. All things seemed to have assumed a new aspect. He made a movement forward, but his legs gave way beneath him, and as he strove to take a step, he fell on his left side.

The knacker waited till the last struggles had ceased. Then he drove off the dogs who had come forward, and seizing the old horse by his hind legs, he began to skin him.

'Poor old fellow,' said Vaska.

'If he had been fatter his skin would have been a very fine one,' replied the knacker.

When the herd came home in the evening the horses on the left could see in the distance a red mass surrounded by dogs, crows, and hawks. One dog, with his fore feet reddened with blood, was eagerly tearing at a strip of flesh. The little chestnut mare examined the sight without budging. She had to be beaten to make her move on. During the night one

heard the howlings of the young wolves rejoicing over the prey they had found. Five in number, they gathered around the body of the poor old horse, and quarrelled over every scrap of his flesh.

A week later there was nothing to be seen behind the shed save a white skull and two thigh-bones; all the rest had disappeared. During the following summer a peasant passing by picked up these bones and sold them.

The living corpse of Nikita, which still continued to eat and drink, was not put under ground till a much later date. Neither his flesh, nor his skin, nor his bones were of the slightest use to any one.

As for twenty years this living corpse had been a burden to every one, its burial was only a fresh trouble to those who had known it. For a long time past no one had had any need of it. However, other living corpses just like it thought it their duty to array this rotten body in a new uniform and fine boots, to put it in a shell, to place this shell in a leaden coffin for transport to Moscow, and there to rout amongst old graves, in order that this body—clad in a fine uniform and patent-leather boots, but swarming with maggots—might be hidden and covered over with earth.

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